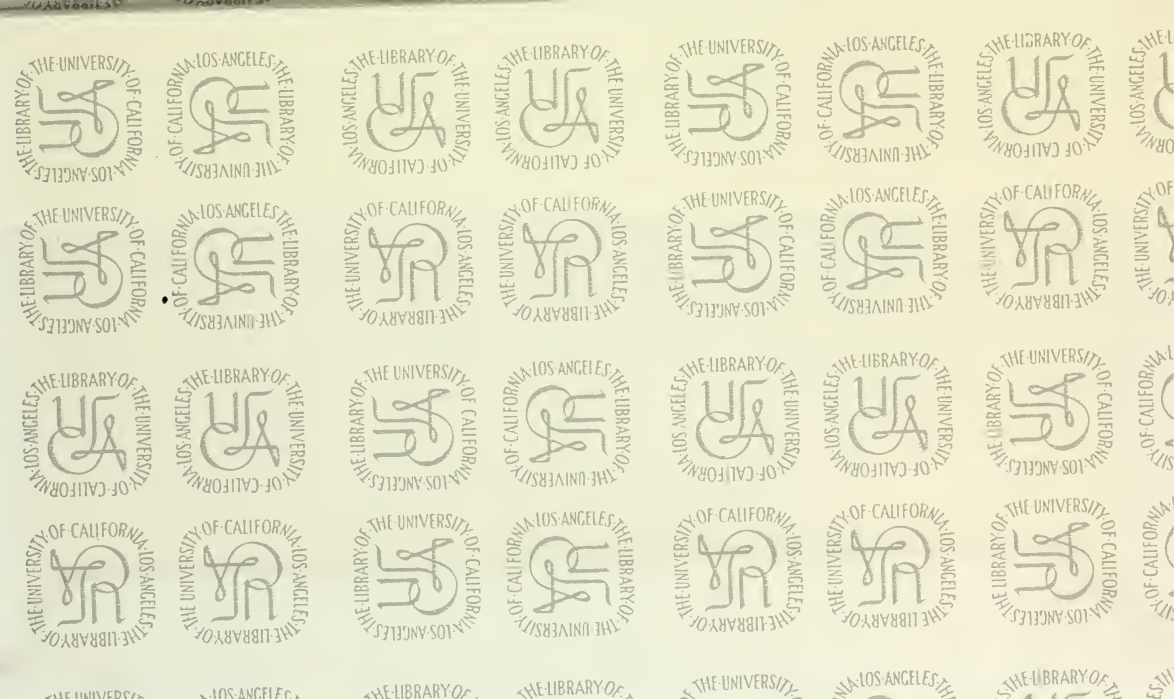
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GHOSTS
OF
LONDON

GHOSTS OF LONDON

By

ELLIOTT O'DONNELL

Author of 'Rooms of Mystery,' 'Women Bluebeards'
'Great Thames Mysteries,' 'Famous Curses'
etc.

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CHAPTER I

THE TOWER OF LONDON AND BETHLEHEM ASYLUM

IF tragedy be the most prolific source of ghosts, and my investigations have led me to believe that it is, surely no place should be more haunted than the Tower of London. For many years, more particularly in the Middle Ages, it was almost daily the scene of someone's unhappy death, for not only were executions, authorized by royal warrant, carried out there, but within its walls murders were secretly committed and accompanied, in most instances, by cruelties of a nature too ghastly and revolting to be told.

That its weird and gloomy precincts have been haunted in the past there is little doubt (this opinion is not founded only on the theory of cause and effect, but on certain records), and should certain rumours recently circulated have any foundation in fact, it would seem that similar hauntings may be experienced there at the present time. Perhaps the best authenticated story of a Tower ghost was that published in *Notes and Queries* for 1860 by Mr. Edmund Lenthal Swifte, Keeper of the Crown Jewels from 1814 to 1852. According to this story, late one Saturday night in October, 1817, Mr. and Mrs. Swifte, their son and Mrs. Swifte's sister, were seated at supper in the sitting-room of the Jewel House, which had recently been modernized. The doors, three in number, were all closed; the dark and heavy window curtains were

drawn close, and the only light in the room came from two tall wax candles on the table. Mr. Swifte sat at one end of the table, his son sat beside him on his right hand, Mrs. Swifte faced the chimney piece, and her sister sat opposite her. Midnight had just struck, and Mrs. Swifte was about to take a sip of wine, when she looked up and immediately cried out, "Good God! What is that?" Upon following his wife's gaze, Mr. Swifte saw a cylindrical-shaped object like a glass tube, hovering, in mid-air, between the table and the ceiling. It was about the thickness of his arm and contained a thick fluid, part of which was white and part light-blue. As he stared at it, the white and blue intermingled and then separated, and kept on doing so for about two minutes, during which time no one spoke. Then the thing began to move very slowly, passing directly in front of Mr. Swifte's sister-in-law, his son and himself. On reaching Mrs. Swifte, it paused for a moment, and then very slowly and deliberately stationed itself immediately above her right shoulder. The moment this happened Mrs. Swifte crouched down, and putting both hands on her right shoulder shrieked out, "Oh, Christ! It has seized me."

Mad with anger and fright at the thing's attack on his wife, Mr. Swifte picked up a chair, and swinging it round his head aimed a terrific blow at the cylindrical object. The chair, however, passed right through the thing, encountering no resistance till it struck the wall; and at the same time, apparently, or a few seconds later, upon this point Mr. Swifte is not very clear, the cylindrical object vanished. What may seem strange to some people is that only Mr. and Mrs.

Swifte saw the cylindrical object, the two present besides, saw nothing. To those, however, who, like myself, have had experience with ghostly phenomena, there is nothing very extraordinary in this circumstance, since it not infrequently happens that while some of the people present in a room or elsewhere see a ghostly form, the rest of those present do not, the reason being, so I believe, that ghosts have the power of appearing exclusively to those to whom they wish to appear; in other words, they have the power of rendering themselves visible to some and invisible to others, at one and the same time. Sceptics declare that the phenomena Mr. and Mrs. Swifte saw must have been due either to trickery or to some natural and physical agency, not necessarily in the room, but operating, may be, from a distance, but Mr. Swifte left no stone unturned to prove definitely that such could not have been the case. He was not a spiritualist, nor did he claim to be "psychic," therefore he was in a position to examine what had happened with an open and unbiassed mind, and after much deliberation and careful analysis he came to the conclusion that the phenomenon he and his wife had witnessed could not be satisfactorily explained in accordance with any known physical laws. This, apparently, was the only ghostly phenomenon he himself had experienced during his long term of office at the Tower, but we have his authority for another strange occurrence that took place there.

At about twelve o'clock one night in January, 1816, a sentry pacing the paved yard in front of the Jewel House saw a dark object coming up the flight of stone steps under the building. The steps being in semi-

darkness he could form no definite idea as to the identity of this object, which was not a human being, he thought, but some queer kind of animal. However, as he stared at it, with increasing wonder and alarm, a moonbeam falling directly on it proved it to be an enormous bear, that was rapidly advancing towards him, with a horrible glitter in its eyes. For a moment or so he was too paralysed to stir, but on realizing that the creature, unless it were stopped, would soon have him in its clutches, he struck at it furiously with his bayonet. To his unmitigated horror, the bayonet passed right through the bear without encountering any hindrance and stuck in the wall beyond, whilst the bear, obviously unharmed, came on. This was the climax: with a wild shriek of terror, he fell to the ground in a fit.

"When, on the morrow, I saw the unfortunate sentinel in the main guardroom," Mr. Swifte writes, "his fellow sentinel was with him and testified to having seen him at his post, just before the alarm, awake and alert, and to have spoken to him. Moreover, I then heard the man tell his own story. I saw him once again on the following day, but changed beyond recognition; in another day or two the brave and steady soldier, who could have mounted a breach and led a forlorn hope with unshaken nerves, *died*, the victim of a shadow."

Surprise has been expressed that any man should die from the effect of having seen a ghost, but there is no reason for supposing this case to be unique. Those who are acquainted with ghost-lore will know of cases of a more or less similar nature. When I asked the late Mr. W. T. Stead for the address of a certain

badly haunted house in Barnet, he refused to give it to me, declaring that the ghost was dangerous ; several people who had seen it having suffered so great a shock from the encounter that death had ensued. I admit this statement seemed to me at the time to be incredible, but I have no doubt now that Mr. Stead was right, for my own subsequent experiences with ghostly phenomena have forced me to the conclusion that a certain percentage of sudden deaths from heart failure are primarily due to some horrifying manifestation from the darker side of the Unknown. Nor do such calamities always happen to people known to have led wicked and dissolute lives : they happen sometimes to the most exemplary. Very probably the phantom seen by the sentry in the Tower was that of one of the bears that used to be kept there for the cruel purpose of baiting, for tragedy in the lives of animals has the same result psychically as it has in the lives of humans ; a fact, I would add, which renders the frequency of animal ghosts not at all surprising.

Another Tower haunting is that of Anne Boleyn ;[1] her phantom has not only been seen on the Tower Hill : it has appeared, at least on one occasion, in the Tower chapel. According to an authentic account of her appearance in the Tower chapel, it seems that, at midnight, a certain Captain, who was on duty at the Tower, set off on his rounds, with one of the sentries. When they came to the chapel, the Captain was surprised to see that it was lighted up.

" What's the meaning of that ? " he remarked to the sentry. " Surely it's too late an hour for any service."

[1] Vide *Ghostly Visitors*, by " Spectre Stricken."

" Yes, sir," the sentry responded. " There ain't no service, but I've often seen that light and stranger things too. So have the other night sentries, and I'm blessed if we can hexplain them. They beat us, they do."

" It's certainly very odd," the Captain said, and he stared, rubbed his eyes, and stared again. The light was still there, however; it was no hallucination. " Fetch a ladder," he said; and when the ladder arrived, he placed it against the chapel wall, and mounting it peered through one of the windows.

What he saw thrilled him through and through. Nothing could have been more amazing. The whole interior of the chapel was illuminated with a bluish-white light, emanating seemingly from nowhere, and coming down the centre aisle was a procession of stately men and women, clad in the court costume of Henry VIII's time. The men for the most part were extremely handsome, and the women strikingly beautiful, but at their head walked a lady more beautiful than any of them. Jewels sparkled in her hair and on her snow-white neck and arms, and the Captain, who had but lately seen and admired a portrait of Anne Boleyn, instantly recognized in the leader of the procession that unhappy lady. They advanced in absolute silence, with heads held erect and eyes that looked neither to the right nor left, but always straight ahead of them.

Presently the light, which, as I have said, seemed to emanate from nowhere, became concentrated on the leader of the procession, and the Captain, who was very susceptible to the charms of the other sex, marvelled at the beauty of her slim white fingers, which

were conspicuously adorned with rings of the costliest description. On arriving at the bottom of the centre aisle, the procession made a detour of the chapel by way of the side aisles, and after perambulating thus several times, it suddenly vanished, the light disappearing with it and leaving the interior of the building in utter darkness.

It was then, and not until then, when he could no longer see the figures and marvel at their magnificence and beauty, that the Captain first began to realize that the actors in the spectacle he had witnessed were not living human beings at all, but mere phantoms. He never saw the phenomenon again, though, doubtless, he often wished he might do so.

The council-chamber, one of the state-rooms in the Tower, where tradition affirms Guy Fawkes was examined and probably racked, is said to be haunted. I can find no authentic record of any ghost having been seen there, although there are plenty of rumours to that effect. When I visited the Tower many years ago, for the first time, an official I closely questioned as to the alleged hauntings told me there was a story current concerning this particular room. It was to this effect.

A soldier on duty at the Tower, passing the council-chamber at night, heard dreadful groans proceeding from it. Thinking someone must be ill, he was about to rap, when the door abruptly opened and a huge figure, well over six feet in height, came out. In build it was like a man, but its nude body was entirely covered with reddish-brown hair, which gave it the appearance of an ape. Its face, which was clean shaven and pallid, might have been that of a middle-aged man, but the expression on it was hardly human and

devilish to a degree. Without apparently noticing the soldier, who, realizing that what he saw was nothing belonging to this world, was, in consequence, petrified with horror, the thing walked along the passage, till it came to a flight of stairs, down which it vanished. The soldier thereupon regained his equanimity to some extent, but was thankful enough when his vigil for that night ended and he was able to rejoin his comrades. Unfortunately, the identity of this phantom cannot be satisfactorily established. But for the fact that the soldier who saw it was quite sure that it had the face of a man, one might have supposed it to have been the ghost of an ape whose bones had been discovered shortly before in an unoccupied turret of the Tower; no other theory was formulated, and consequently its identity remains unproven.

I cannot, of course, guarantee the truth of this story; I can only say it was told me with every appearance of sincerity. I admit that many of the noises heard in the Tower at night and attributed to ghosts may well be caused by rats that come, in shoals, from the Thames, with the tide; but, obviously, rats must be ruled out in the case of things seen, and if the things seen can only be accounted for by the superphysical, why may not the things heard be so accounted for too?

Another building, no less famous in its way than the Tower, that at one time, at least, possessed a ghost, was the Hospital of the Star of Bethlehem, London's first lunatic asylum. We have all, I imagine, heard of Bedlam, and many of us, no doubt, have friends whom we think ought to be there, but it is not all of us who know that this very significant name owes its origin

to the Hospital of the Star of Bethlehem, of which latter word Bedlam is a contraction.

As far back as 1246, Simon Fitz-Mary, a London Sheriff, founded a priory on the site of the present Liverpool Street Station (it is interesting to remember that where we now see railway trains and crowds of eager, hustling travellers, ascetic monks and pious nuns used once to tell their beads, sprinkle holy water and chant their prayers), which priory, some centuries later, was converted into the Hospital of the Star of Bethlehem for insane people. The method of dealing with maniacs in those days differed very much from that employed in our day, for then mad people were generally regarded as obsessed by evil spirits, and in order to get rid of the latter, when exorcism failed, recourse was had to the stick.

Thus the poor unfortunate wretches who, through no fault of their own, were insane, were often subjected to the most severe chastisement, and even in more enlightened times, when such a superstition no longer existed, lunatics frequently received very brutal treatment at the hands of their keepers. It follows, therefore, that tragedies in lunatic asylums in those days were not uncommon, and probably they were far more common than was ever dreamed of by the public, despite the fact that its suspicions must have been aroused by works such as *Valentine Vox*, which was a more or less successful attempt at exposure. Happily, however, this kind of cruelty in asylums has long since ceased, and we are only reminded of it by occasional rumours of ghostly happenings in certain of the older institutions.

To return to the priory. It was given by Henry VIII

to the City of London, who, after due consideration, converted it into the aforesaid Hospital of the Star of Bethlehem. In 1675 it was moved from Bishopsgate to Moorfields, whence, after various changes, it found its way in 1812 to the junction of the Lambeth and Kennington roads, where it remained till its final removal into the country. It was not until the end of the eighteenth century that it achieved notoriety through its now world-famous ghost.

In 1780, a young and handsome Indian came to London, and took lodgings in the house of a merchant on Fish Street Hill, close to London Bridge. Now the merchant at that time happened to have in his employ a very plain and shy maid-servant, called Rebecca, who loved poetry—especially romantic poetry—and often, when in bed, used to lie awake thinking of what she had read, and repeating aloud to herself certain lines she had memorized. Hence, it may be deduced that she was both imaginative and impressionable, the sort of girl who might easily fall in love, and fall deeply. This she did, the moment she saw the young Indian lodger, and henceforth, instead of repeating lines of poetry in bed at night, she would lie awake repeating his name and conjuring up his image. Then, one day, to her unspeakable consternation, she learned he was leaving. So reserved was Rebecca and so successful in her habitual self-restraint, that the Indian had not the slightest suspicion she was in love with him. Indeed, he scarcely thought of her at all. She inspired no sentiment whatever in him. She was just the domestic—very unattractive—and nothing more. This she did not know. Indeed, she believed rather the reverse, for she had magnified

his casual, non-significant and ordinary glances into those of ill-concealed, latent love, and tender admiration.

To her bitter disappointment, not a word of regret did he utter when she brought him his breakfast that last, much-dreaded morning. He just ate it hurriedly and in silence. She followed him to the door, with some of his luggage, still hoping. And then the thunderbolt. With a careless nod of his head and a still more careless good-bye, he thrust something into her cold and not unshapely palm. It was a sovereign! The other inmates of the house and the neighbours wondered infinitely, when they saw Rebecca running after the chaise, which bore away her adored one, screaming and holding out the sovereign, which, in his innocent generosity, he had given her as a tip. The money in lieu of the love she had been so eagerly hoping for turned her brain, and she was, henceforth, a hopeless lunatic.

She then became an inmate of Bedlam, that is to say, the Hospital of the Star of Bethlehem, where she remained till she died, the fatal sovereign continually in her grasp. When she died, she was still clutching it, and the sight of it in her dead fingers so aroused the cupidity of a keeper, that, biding his opportunity, he stole it. So she was buried without it. Hence the haunting. Shortly after her death strange noises were heard in the asylum at night, footsteps and the opening and shutting of doors, some of which were locked on the inside. And more. Sometimes in the daytime, and sometimes at night, the ghost of Rebecca was seen, a lean figure, with ghastly white cheeks and wild eyes, gliding about corridors, rooms and staircases,

always hunting, with never-abating feverishness, for her precious, purloined sovereign.

When the asylum shifted its quarters to its last London home, Rebecca's ghost went with it and stayed there, periodically manifesting itself, according to report, to patients and officials alike, right up to the time of its removal into the country in September, 1924.

Whether the haunting is still going on, I am unable to say with any degree of authority. I can only surmise that it does, from certain rumours that have reached me.

CHAPTER II

ST. JAMES'S PALACE, THE GREEN PARK AND ST. JAMES'S PARK

WITHOUT wishing in any degree to alarm the august inhabitants of St. James's Palace, one cannot help saying that, owing to incidents that have occurred there, according to history and tradition, in the past, it would not be at all surprising to find that it harboured ghosts galore, and that denizens of another world foregathered there in large numbers.

Many centuries ago, exactly how many it is impossible to say, according to the historian Stowe, there stood on the site the Palace now occupies a religious institution, dedicated to St. James the Less, Bishop of Jerusalem. Whence, we suppose, the Palace, now a royal residence, derives its name. The institution, presumably, was nothing more or less than a hospital, its inmates consisting of fourteen sisters, maidens, that were lepers, living "chastely and honestly in divine service," and certain citizens of London, with the generosity that is so frequently a characteristic of the business men of our great metropolis, subscribed liberally in money and lands to its upkeep.

Some idea of its age may be deduced from the fact that it was rebuilt by Berkynge, Abbot of Westminster, in the reign of Henry III. The privilege of an annual fair (to be held on the eve of St. James and the six following days) was granted to it by Edward I, who

decreed that all the profits therefrom should be handed over to the hospital, the custody of which was subsequently granted to Eton College by Henry VI.

It then continued, in a more or less flourishing state, till Henry VIII, in his pretended zeal for a reformed religion, ordained the dissolution of the monasteries. Coveting the ground the hospital stood on, he classed it with the monasteries, on the plea that it was founded on a religious basis, and, when it was pulled down, he erected on its site a mansion for his own private use and pleasure.

Standing amid a fairyland of flowers, and bordered by woods which Henry took good care should be well stocked with game, it was an ideal country residence, and with a cock-pit and a tilting-yard added, left nothing in the way of sport to be desired. The tilting-yard occupied the space now known as Horse Guards' Parade.

Doubtless Henry had many an orgy in his new abode, and there is no doubt, also, that it witnessed more than one outrageous act of cruelty, for kings in those days, especially kings of the temperament and character of this Tudor monarch, made short work of those who had the misfortune to incur their displeasure. Hence, the not infrequent discovery in royal demesnes of cunningly concealed human bones.

It was here, within this Palace, that hapless Charles I spent his last night on earth, a fact that might well have given rise to a haunting, if acute emotions be, as I firmly believe them not infrequently to be, the forerunners of ghostly happenings.

It was not, however, until the reign of the second Charles that we find an actual case of haunting in the royal Palace recorded.

Among the numerous mistresses of the Merry Monarch was the Duchesse de Mazarine, who, according to tradition, was as fair as she was frail. That she was so in very truth, I myself believe, because there is little doubt that Charles was an unerring connoisseur of feminine beauty, and had an almost uncanny *flair* for detecting latent passion and a tendency to frailty in the other sex. The Duchess's greatest woman friend was Madame de Beauclair, mistress of the Duke of York, also, according to tradition, more than ordinarily beautiful, and between these two women there existed a depth of attachment that was rarely to be met with in a royal court of olden days. After the burning of Whitehall, both ladies were awarded very handsome apartments in the Stable Yard of St. James's Palace.

After a while, Charles and James discovering younger beauties, paid little heed to the Duchess and Madame de Beauclair; however, the neglected ones found consolation in each other's company, and, in their solitude, began to think seriously of the problem of another life. They then made a compact that whichever of them should pass away first should return, if it were possible to do so, and inform the survivor of how she was faring in the other world. This compact was continually discussed, both women being very much in earnest, and the Duchess happening to be suddenly taken very ill, Madame de Beauclair reminded her of it; whereupon the Duchess assured Madame de Beauclair that she might depend on the pledge she, the Duchess, had so often given. An hour after this conversation, which was carried on in the presence of several other people, the Duchess died.

Some years later, the author of and authority for this story [1] paid a visit to Madame de Beauclair, and their conversation turning on the problem of another world, Madame de Beauclair expressed her disbelief in one with considerable emphasis, declaring that she had sufficient reason for so doing in the failure of her friend, the Duchess, to fulfil their compact.

"Did she still exist, no matter where," Madame de Beauclair remarked, "she would most certainly have found some means of communicating with me. That she has not done so convinces me that she no longer exists and that there is no after life."

Some months later, the lady who tells this story was visiting one of Madame de Beauclair's friends, and was about to begin a game of cards with her, when a servant entered the room with a message from Madame de Beauclair. The message was to the effect that if her friend wanted to see her again in this world, she must go to her at once. However, upon learning that Madame de Beauclair was apparently well, her friend, who was suffering from a cold herself, declined to go, whereupon a second and more urgent request was received by her, accompanied by a casket containing Madame de Beauclair's watch, chain, and various articles of jewellery. The recipient of the message and request then went, and her visitor went with her. On arriving at Madame de Beauclair's, they were ushered into her presence and found her seemingly well, though extremely agitated. She had sent for them, she said, because she was quite certain her days were numbered. She had, at last, received a visit from her deceased friend, the Duchess of Mazarine.

[1] *Accredited Ghost Stories*, by T. M. Jarvis, published 1823.

"I perceived not how she entered," Madame de Beauclair went on, "but turning my eyes towards yonder corner of the room, I saw her stand in the same form and habit she was accustomed to appear in when living; fain would I have spoken, but had not the power of utterance. She took a little circlet round the chamber, seeming rather to swim than walk, then stopped by the side of that Indian chest and, looking at me with her usual sweetness, said, 'Beauclair, between the hours of twelve and one this night you will be with me.'"

Madame de Beauclair added that directly she opened her mouth, to ask her friend's phantasm a question about the other world, it vanished.

Madame de Beauclair, having nothing further to relate—it was then close on midnight—her two visitors were trying to comfort her, when, suddenly, a change came over her face—hitherto she had appeared to be in perfectly normal health—and she cried, "Oh, I am sick at heart." Mrs. Ward, her confidential maid, who was in the room all the time, at once gave her a restorative, but it had no effect. She grew rapidly worse, and in about half an hour she died, at the very hour the phantom had prophesied.

Rumour asserts that the ghosts of the Duchess and Madame de Beauclair have been seen in the Palace, from time to time, but of these rumoured appearances there does not seem to be any authentic record.

So much has been written about Charles II's love intrigues, and he has been credited with so many, that one would suppose him to be the only king in civilized times who had had concubines, but, as a matter of fact, both George I and George II kept mistresses in

St. James's Palace, and much scandal was caused by them.

Among the most notorious were the Duchess of Kendal, the German mistress of George I, Mrs. Brett, one of his English mistresses, and Mrs. Howard (afterwards the Countess of Suffolk), the mistress of George II. Their " goings on " might well have given rise to hauntings, for there is little doubt they were past mistresses in vices of all kinds, particularly those that appealed most to the very animal Georges. The Stuarts, one and all, no matter how profligate—and some of them, perhaps, could not have been more so —still retained certain of the gentleman, but the same could not be said with regard to the earliest of our Hanoverian monarchs.

One night Mr. Howard, missing his pretty wife from his home, made inquiries as to her whereabouts and learned that she had gone, clandestinely, to St. James's Palace. He, therefore, hurried thither in a fury, and forcing his way past every obstruction, he shouted for his wife, demanding that she should come to him at once. He had almost succeeded in finding his adored one, who was, as he feared, lying in the arms of her royal lover, when the latter, relinquishing his love-making for the moment, appeared upon the scene and ordered that the indignant husband should be thrust into the street and his eviction accompanied by the promise of a pension of £1,200 a year.

About the year 1810 a tragedy, that might well account for some of the ghostly happenings, real or imaginary, in the Palace, took place.

The Duke of Cumberland, who resided in the Palace at that date, had an Italian valet named Sellis, who, for

some reason or another, bore him a grudge. According to his own version of the affair, the Duke awoke one night, to hear someone in the room. It was Sellis, armed with a knife, and a terrible struggle ensued. The Duke, however, being powerful and active, succeeded in overcoming the Italian, who, upon being allowed to retire to his room, immediately cut his throat, from fear of the consequence of his attempt to assassinate his royal master. There was, of necessity, an inquest, and, there being no evidence to show Sellis was insane, a simple verdict of *felo de se* was returned.

There can be little real doubt that the Duke's story was true, but unfortunately he was the least popular of an unpopular family, and horrible insinuations in reference to this tragedy were consequently levelled against him, mostly, of course, by the lower classes, who are always ready and eager to snatch at any opportunity of attacking the upper classes. A tradition that the Duke murdered his valet because his valet "knew too much," and that the valet's ghost, in consequence, periodically haunts the Palace, still apparently survives, for, according to rumour, the ghost of a man, in old-world clothes, with white face and dark, gleaming eyes, may still sometimes be seen at night in a certain part of the Palace—the part where the tragedy is said to have been enacted.

The Duke, who was thus, in my opinion, unwarrantably maligned, remained in England till 1837, when he went to Hanover, to assume the kingship of that country. He never returned to London, at least not in the material body.

Some few years prior to the Sellis mystery, as it was termed, a great sensation was caused in the West End

by the appearance of a ghost in St. James's Park. It seems that some twenty or so years previously, that is to say in or about 1784, a sergeant in the Guards cut off his wife's head and threw her body into the canal, that then ran through the Park. What he did with her head is not known, nor is it known what subsequently happened to him, whether, for instance, he was apprehended and punished, or whether he managed to elude conviction and escape punishment. With regard to the haunting in 1804, sentries on duty in the Park at night declared they saw a headless woman there, and that she walked past them, greatly, of course, to their alarm, and then disappeared. The matter was much talked about, naturally, by the soldiers in the guard-room, and sentries went to their various posts in the Park, shivering and shaking. The weather, seemingly, mattered not; the headless phantom came on fine nights when the Park was bathed in moonlight and the great, silent trees stood out even more clearly than in the daytime, and it came on dark, stormy nights, when the wind blew and howled among the trees and the rain fell in sheer torrents. Heat and cold, too, had no effect on it; its nightly appearance could be counted on. A soldier pacing to and fro, apprehensively watching the black shadows of the solemn oaks and elms, would suddenly see a figure emerge from behind some tree and glide noiselessly towards him. He did not challenge it; he shut his eyes and kept them shut till it had passed. Why, because it was headless, the headless phantom of the murdered wife. The many stories told of it by affrighted sentries coming to the ears of the authorities, an official inquiry was made; and several

depositions of men on oath were taken before Sir Richard Ford, one of the magistrates of Westminster. Here is one :[1]

"I do solemnly declare that when guard at Recruit House (now Wellington Barracks) on or about the 3rd inst., about half-past one in the morning, I perceived the figure of a woman, without a head, rise from the earth, at a distance of about two feet before me. I was so alarmed at the circumstance that I had not the power to speak to it, which was my wish to have done. But I distinctly observed that the figure was dressed in a red striped gown, with red spots between each stripe, and that part of the dress and figure appeared to me to be enveloped in a cloud. In about the space of two minutes, whilst my eyes were fixed on the object, it vanished from my sight. I was perfectly sober and collected at the time, and being in great trepidation, called to the next sentinel, who met me half-way, and to whom I communicated the strange sight I had seen."

Signed by George Jones, of Lieut.-Colonel Taylor's Company of Coldstream Guards. Westminster, Jan. 15, 1804.

The headless woman was not, however, the only source of trouble to the soldiers. Strange, uncanny sounds were frequently heard, not only in the Park itself, but in certain of the buildings adjoining the Park. With regard to them, too, depositions of soldiers on sentry duty were taken. This is one :

"I do hereby declare that, whilst on guard behind the Armoury House (to the best of my recollection about three weeks ago), I heard at twelve o'clock a

[1] *The Story of the London Parks*, by Jacob Larwood.

tremendous noise, which proceeded from the windows of an uninhabited house near to the spot where I was on duty. At the same time I heard a voice cry out, 'Bring me a light! Bring me a light!' The last word was uttered in so feeble and so changeable a tone of voice that I concluded some person was ill, and consequently offered them my assistance. I could, however, obtain no answer to my proposal, although I repeated it several times, and as often heard the voice use the same terms.

"I endeavoured to see the person who called out, but in vain. On a sudden the violent noise was renewed, which appeared to me to resemble sashes of windows lifted hastily up and down, but that they were moved in quick succession and in different parts of the house, nearly at the same time, so it seems to me impossible that one person could accomplish the whole business.

"I heard several of my regiment say they have heard similar noises and proceedings, but I have never heard the calls accounted for."

Signed, Richard Donkin, 12th Company of Coldstream Guards, Whitehall, Jan. 17, 1804.

Although both cases, that is to say, that of the headless woman and the noises in the house, were thoroughly investigated, no explanation on physical grounds was forthcoming. Both affairs remained mysteries, soluble, so it seemed, only on the hypothesis of the superphysical. The finding, in 1795, during digging operations on the Parade, of a skeleton, sex not determined, but thought to be that of a woman, gave rise to speculations regarding other sounds and sights believed to be ghostly.

St. James's Park, indeed, as may be said of all the old London parks, has witnessed many tragedies, and I know, from experience, they are all at times badly haunted. One of the more recent ghosts in St. James's and the Green Park, not counting the headless woman phantom, that is still alleged to manifest itself periodically; is that of a man in evening clothes, said to be the earth-bound spirit of an individual who either shot or poisoned himself on a bench or seat in the Green Park, probably, thirty or more years ago. Some time before the Great War I had a first-hand account of this ghost from a man who declared he had seen it.

"I was walking along the broad walk that runs parallel with Piccadilly, one wet afternoon in July," he told me, "when a tall, grey-haired man, in evening clothes, caught me up and walked on ahead of me. That anyone should choose to take a walk on such a night—for, although the rain could not be described as heavy, it was distinctly wetting, and therefore, to most people, discomforting—bareheaded, and without overcoat or mackintosh, struck me as somewhat remarkable, and, my curiosity roused, I observed him more closely, perhaps, than I should have done otherwise. I noticed that although my steps produced a slight crunching sound on the moist soil, his made no noise whatever, despite the fact that he was wearing dancing pumps, another idiosyncrasy. He continued walking ahead of me till we came to a spot where several paths intersected, and I was wondering which path he would select, when, to my amazement, he suddenly began to grow fainter and fainter until, finally, he vanished altogether, and I found myself

staring into space. Realizing, then, that what I had seen was a ghost, I felt, if not actually frightened, rather scared."

There is a hillock in the Green Park, and on it a clump of trees. Some years ago, a member of the now defunct International Club for Psychic Research, in Regent Street, who is now defunct himself, used to confide in me his adoration for a certain tree in this clump. He wrote sonnets to it, made love to it, serenaded it with his favourite instrument, the flute. He was, I am convinced, deeply enamoured of it, and if half the things he told me about it were true, it must have been a very wonderful tree indeed.

He said it used to sigh and murmur when he spoke to it, but he could never interpret what it said, because it seemed to be speaking in a foreign tongue and its voice sounded so far away.

Of course, there are haunted trees in the Green Park as well as in Hyde Park, trees that harbour phantoms that have once inhabited material human bodies, and phantoms with little resemblance to anything either human or animal. I have met people who, with seeming perfect sincerity, have declared they have encountered these various kinds of tree spirits, and I believe that some of the trees that harbour phantoms exercise a peculiarly evil and harmful influence.

However, according to my friend of the International Club, there was nothing ghostly or baleful about the tree he loved. It was associated with something superphysical, it is true, but it was to fairyland rather than to ghostland that that superphysical belonged.

Of course, many people may, and undoubtedly will,

say that this man who made love to a tree was mad, and eccentric to a degree he undoubtedly was; but it must not be forgotten that in the south and west of Ireland, in Oregon, and in certain other countries, there are trees said to be obsessed or haunted at times both by ghosts and by fairies.

CHAPTER III

BERKELEY SQUARE AND RED LION SQUARE

No alleged haunting caused greater interest and sensation in the seventies and eighties of the last century than that of No. — Berkeley Square.

When I first visited London, as a schoolboy, in the early nineties, I soon found my way to Berkeley Square, and although No. — was no longer a prominent topic of conversation, it having long since lost its excessive notoriety, I was, nevertheless, thrilled when I caught a glimpse of it. Then few people questioned the truth of its once having been really haunted, the stories told about it were generally accepted as facts, and not, as what many people now consider them, fabrications. There is still much diversity of opinion as to the origin of the reports of the hauntings.

Some think they arose from the fact that the house was for some time occupied by a very eccentric hypochondriac, who shut himself up there and saw no one, inhabiting one room only and letting the other rooms go to wrack and ruin. Sometimes he wandered around them at night, a lighted candle in his hand, and this, it was surmised, led his neighbours and people passing by to believe that the premises were haunted. Moreover, as the recluse was tall and haggard, the fitful light from the candle, accentuating his pallor, made him appear eerie and spectre-like;

and thus it may have been that the report got about that the house was haunted by a very terrible-looking apparition. Other sceptics with regard to the super-physical were of the opinion that the story of the hauntings was merely an invention on the part of some caretaker, who wanted to prevent people, by scaring them, from buying or renting the house, in order that he (or she) might go on living there.

Allusion to this house was made by well-known contemporary authors, and might be found both in books and articles. Lord Lyttleton, for instance, writing of it in *Notes and Queries*,[1] said, "It is quite true that there is a house in Berkeley Square said to be haunted, and long unoccupied on that account. There are strange stories about it, into which this deponent cannot enter"; and the author of an interesting article on ghostly happenings in the now defunct *Mayfair*,[2] a society magazine, writes, "The house in Berkeley Square contains at least one room of which the atmosphere is supernaturally fatal to body and mind alike. A girl saw, heard and felt such horror in it that she went mad, and never recovered sanity enough to tell how or why.[3]

"A gentleman, a disbeliever in ghosts, dared to sleep in it, and was found a corpse in the middle of the floor, after frantically ringing for help in vain. Rumours suggest other cases of the same kind, all ending in death, madness, or both, as the result of sleeping, or trying to sleep, in that room. The very party walls of the house, when touched, are found saturated with electric horror. It is uninhabited, save

[1] November, 1872. [2] May 10, 1879.

[3] See Addendum.

by an elderly man and woman, who act as caretakers; but even these have no access to the room. That is kept locked, the key being in the hands of a mysterious and seemingly nameless person, who comes to the house once every six months, locks up the elderly people in the basement, and then unlocks the room and occupies himself in it for hours."

Bulwer-Lytton introduces the house into at least one of his stories. Whether it was really haunted or not I cannot say. As I remarked before, its notoriety was much on the wane the first time I saw it, and I have never crossed its threshold.

During a nocturnal vigil in a haunted house, near Bristol, the late Lord Curzon of Kedleston assured me No. — Berkeley Square never was haunted. He said the stories relating to it were pure inventions, and I understood him to say, too, that the house had, at one time, belonged to a relative of his, who, in consequence of the sinister rumours about it, had caused it to be demolished and rebuilt.

The original building may, or may not, I think, have harboured beings from another world, but whether it did or not, the present house—renumbered, I am told—is absolutely free from any such phenomena.

One of the most widely-known and hair-raising versions of the hauntings of the old house is this:

One night, in the seventies of the last century, two sailors found themselves stranded in London. Having spent all their pay in riotous living they were now penniless, and since they knew no one, they were both friendless and homeless too. It was a none too pleasant situation, they told themselves, especially on a night in mid-winter. After wandering about dis-

consolately for some hours, they strolled into Berkeley Square. Then, one of them seeing "To be sold or let" at No. —, was seized with an inspiration.

"I say, Bill," he remarked to his mate, "why not get in there? It will be better at any rate than sleeping out-of-doors."

Bill agreed, and after a look round to see no policeman was about, they descended into the area of the house and examined the doors and windows. The latter were strongly barred, but a few mighty shoves —they were both hefty men—against a door eventually forced it open. They groped their way in the pitch dark till they bumped up against a staircase. One of them then struck a match—he had not done so before, for fear of being seen from the street—and they took stock of their surroundings.

They were in a stone passage, at the foot of the staircase leading to the first floor.

"Better upstairs," Bill commented, "it smells damp down 'ere."

"'Ouses that 'ave stayed empty a while always do smell damp," Mick, the other sailor, responded. "Suppose we look around 'ere for some wood or summat to light a fire with, and then make for one of the back rooms upstairs?"

Bill agreed. Being handy men they soon obtained wood, by the simple process of breaking up several of the kitchen dresser drawers and removing some of the skirting boards. Some loose wallpaper likewise came in useful. Armed thus with requisites, they made their way, as lightly as possible, upstairs, and after a hasty survey of several rooms, finally decided on a back one on the second floor.

Endowed with that something which usually characterizes sailors, particularly British sailors, and enables them to overcome the most stupendous difficulties, it did not take Bill and Mick long to make a fire in the small, rusty grate, despite the dampness of the long-disused chimney. What with the ruddy flames, crackling wood and steadily-increasing heat the spirits of the tired tars soon revived, and though they were hungry, a few sips of rum satisfied them tolerably well and made them feel fairly comfortable inside.

"Better than the streets or park, eh, Bill?" Mick observed, extracting a plug of tobacco from his pocket and wedging it with a grimy thumb in his pipe.

Bill gave a grunt, taken by his companion for acquiescence, and puffed away in silence.

"Funny," he ejaculated, after some minutes, "why some 'ouses won't let and stand hempty for so long. I wonder what's the matter with this one."

"Why should anything be the matter with it?" Mick rejoined. "There's more 'ouses than people what can afford to take 'em, that's usually the trouble."

"Maybe," Bill grunted, "and maybe not. I 'ave 'eard that 'ouses where murders or suicides 'ave occurred in lie idle for years. Sooperstition, I reckon."

"That's about it," Mick said. "Surprising 'ow sleepy a fire makes one."

After this both men relapsed into silence, then, after a while, came the sound of heavy, steady breathing; they were both asleep, fast asleep.

Bill was the first to wake. A noise somewhere in the house disturbed him. He sat up shivering; the fire had burned very low and the air felt chilly. Fortunately they had laid in a good stock of wood, and

in a few minutes there was once again a cheery glow. It was pitch dark outside, not the vestige of a moon, and a wind, blowing from the east or north-east, howled and moaned fitfully down the chimney and round the house-tops.

Bill took another sip of rum and was about to spread himself out on the floor again, when he heard another sound somewhere in the house. It was like the banging of a door, and seemed to proceed from the basement.

"It must be that blamed door we got in at," he said to himself, "yet I thought I made it secure enough. It's the cursed wind. Well, let it bang! I'm damned if I'm going down there in the cold and dark to fasten it."

His fidgeting about woke Mick.

"What's up, Bill?" he muttered. "Be the Roosians boarding us?"

(The great war with Russia scare was then at its height, and also the popularity of that old-fashioned music-hall ditty, "We don't want to fight, but by Jingo if we do," which was played by every barrel-organ in London.)

"No, you blamed fool," Bill snapped. "It's the b—— door we got in by banging."

"Better go down and shut it, then," Mick observed, "or some bobby will see it and nab us 'ere."

"I'm damned if I'm going down," Bill growled. "What, leave this 'ere fire and light and wander down them stairs in the dark? . . . not me."

"Nor me," Mick said. . . . "So let the coppers come, dozens of 'em, for all I care. They can't say much to us for taking shelter on a night like this."

"And demolishing the kitchen dressers and skirting boards," Bill chuckled. "It will cost the nobs that take this 'ouse a quid or two to replace 'em."

"Hell!" Mick grunted. "What's a quid or two to nobs." He was about to add something decidedly uncomplimentary to the wealthy classes, when another noise, outside the room, cut him short. It was a footstep, to be followed immediately by another, and yet another.

"Did you 'ear that?" he whispered. "Someone's below."

Both men sat up, all attentive now, and listened. Footsteps were coming up the staircase, and there was something about them that puzzled the two sailors. They were soft and cautious, and gave the listeners the impression they were either muffled, or produced by someone without shoes or boots, in socks or just bare feet. Every now and then they halted, as if the person, whoever he was, were listening. Then they came on again. And periodically the staircase creaked. Neither man spoke, but involuntarily they edged nearer to one another and shivered. By and by the footsteps came on to the landing and paused again. The sailors held their breaths and listened fearfully. Then, suddenly, Bill sneezed. Amid the stillness of the house it sounded like a miniature explosion. Mick opened his mouth to curse, but the words froze in his throat. There was something about those halting footsteps outside that thrilled all speech and action out of him. He had never experienced the like of them before. He sat quite still, staring at the door, and Bill did the same.

After a very brief interval, the steps began again,

and, to Bill and Mick's consternation, they came towards the room they were in—soft, stealthy steps, more like those of some great animal than of a human being. Outside the room door they halted, and again Bill and Mick got the impression someone or something was there listening very intently. Then, in the flickering uncertain light from the fire, they saw the door handle slowly begin to turn; inch by inch it opened, wider and wider, and presently they saw a shape—a thing so fantastic and indescribably horrible that they sprang to their feet in a paroxysm of terror. As it entered, creeping furtively towards Mick, Bill darted past it through the doorway out on to the landing. He heard Mick scream, but he was too obsessed with terror to think of going to his assistance.

With one hand clutching the banisters, he got down the staircase somehow and out in the street. Then he broke down, and a policeman found him, some time later, lying on the pavement in a swoon. On hearing his tale, the policeman, accompanied by several other members of the force, entered No. — and eventually discovered Mick lying in the back yard. He had, apparently, jumped from the window of the room in which he and Bill had slept, and broken his neck.

The policemen being, or pretending to be, sceptics where the superphysical was concerned, scoffed at Bill's story and marched him off to the police station. What happened to him subsequently the narrators of this story do not say, for with his capture by the police their narrative ends.

A house in Jones Street, close to Berkeley House, is haunted by some influence that tempts people to drink. I gathered from a former servant that nothing

ghostly is seen there, but that people staying in the house for any length of time, no matter how abstemious they may have been before, invariably become obsessed with a mania for drink. The house has, in fact, seen a whole series of drunkard tenants.

Then there is the strangling ghost of Piccadilly. Much has been written about this case, but no two accounts of it would seem to tally. The version I heard, when the haunting was first spoken about, is this :

A lady, living in a flat over a shop in Piccadilly, one night awoke with a start, to see her bedroom door open and a tall woman, with a very evil face, enter. The woman came up to the bed, and seizing the lady by her throat, with cold, bony fingers, commenced strangling her. Eventually the lady lost consciousness. When she came to, she was alone in the room. Hardly able to decide whether her experience was real or simply a nightmare, she decided to spend another night in the same room, taking care, however, this time to lock her door before getting into bed.

She awoke with a start, at about the same hour as on the previous night, to hear the door open again, despite the fact she had locked it, and see the same dreadful woman come stealthily towards her. Once again did the cold, bony fingers grip her neck, and once again did she undergo all the sensations of slow strangulation, finally losing consciousness.

On recovering this time, she was convinced the room was haunted, and on the morrow she vacated it. It was thus, I was told, that the flat acquired the reputation for being ghost-ridden. There were vague rumours current that some woman had been found dead in her bed, in the flat, under circumstances that

suggested foul play; and as either her servant or a hospital nurse who was attending her was suspected, there existed, it was thought by some, an obvious explanation of the haunting.

Hearing the flat was to be let and that no one would stay in it for long, I went to see it, hoping to obtain permission to spend a night there. However, on my asking the landlord if it were true that the flat was haunted, he was very wroth.

"It's a pure fabrication," he said, "on the part of a lady whom I had to eject for being backward with her rent. She made up this story out of spite."

And thus my investigation ended. For some years after this the flat remained empty, but as it is now let, and there is no complaint, so I understand, of a haunting from the present tenant, I conclude that the ghost has either turned over a new leaf and given up its strangling habits altogether, or is away on holiday.

A no less harrowing haunting was experienced at one time in a house in St. James's Street. Like No. — Berkeley Square, this particular house in St. James's Street long stood empty. Tenants complained of eerie footsteps perambulating the stairs and passages at night, of rappings and bangings, sighing and diabolical laughter. Forms were seen, too; figures with white evil faces used to open the door of a certain room, no matter whether the door was locked or not, and frighten the inmates by peering at them in bed; and, worse still, every now and then, an invisible something would enter this room, accompanied by a ghastly smell. This was the most terrible of all the phenomena. As in the case of the Berkeley Square house, innumerable stories regarding this house were

in circulation. Some seem to be fairly authentic, while the authenticity of others is dubious.

One of these stories, quoted by Mr. Ingram,[1] and therefore, perhaps, to be taken as more or less authentic, is as follows :

During the course of repairs being done to the house, the builder responsible for them, in the temporary absence of his men, went to see how far the work had proceeded, and was ascending one of the staircases, when he heard footsteps just behind him. He looked round. No one was there. He went on, and the same thing happened. He heard footsteps behind him, just as if someone was following him. Still no one to be seen. Somewhat mystified, but thinking that the sounds, possibly, were due to the acoustic properties of the house, he went into a room where a fire was burning cheerily in the hearth, and dragging a chair across the floor towards it, banged it down purposely with considerable violence, and then seated himself in it. To his amazement, all these actions were imitated by some invisible presence. When he heard the presence slam down a chair close to his and then seat itself on it, his fortitude gave way, and he ran out of the room and house in a panic.

My reference in the foregoing case to footsteps—by the way, footsteps are very common phenomena in hauntings—reminds me of an experience I once had in a haunted house in Red Lion Square. It was during the early stages of the Great War. In order to be near the Postal Censorship Headquarters in Kingsway we, my wife and I, shared a maisonnette with an actress friend of ours in one of the quaint old houses in Red

[1] *Haunted Houses and Family Traditions of Great Britain*, by J. H. Ingram.

Lion Square. The maisonnette was on the third and fourth floors of the house, the ground floor, first and second floors being let as offices; the basement was occupied by a caretaker and his family. During our stay there, nothing of a ghostly nature happened, as far as I know, till one day when I was left in our quarters alone, my wife and our friend and her maid having all gone into the country for a few days.

It was on a Saturday afternoon, and I was in my bedroom resting, when I heard heavy, ponderous footsteps slowly ascending the staircase. They came right up to the landing immediately beneath me (I was on the top floor), and halted. Thinking it was the postman, though he generally left the letters on the ground floor, or a tradesman, I went out on to the landing and looked over the banisters, which commanded a full view of the staircase. No one was to be seen. While I was still standing there, looking and wondering, the footsteps began to descend the stairs. I then started off in pursuit, and kept just behind them, all the way down to the ground floor and hall door, which I saw opened by some invisible agency and then shut. When this happened, I realized that the footsteps could only have been due to some denizen from the other world.

The impression I got when I followed them down the stairs, only a step or two behind, was that they were produced by some very old person, and this conception received some confirmation, as I will show later on. I did not hear the steps again, but on my mentioning the incident to our actress friend, on her return, she said she and other people had often experienced them, and it was well known in the Square that the house bore the reputation of being haunted.

My wife descending the staircase one evening, to post a letter, heard a heavy object fall, with a loud thud, just behind her. It sounded like a human body. She was so startled that she ran down the rest of the stairs as fast as she could, and dared not reascend the staircase alone. When she did so, some minutes later, with our friend, who had returned from the theatre, nothing was found that could in any way account for the noise.

I questioned the caretaker and his family about the house, and the eldest daughter told me she had on several occasions seen an old man, with a long, white beard, on the staircase and also peeping at her through various doorways. He always vanished, in an inexplicable fashion, if she spoke or attempted to approach him.

There were rumours of some tragedy having happened in the house many years previously, but I have not been able to find any authentic record regarding the same.

Two or three years after we left the house, the late Duke of Newcastle, who was interested in Psychical Research, though greatly opposed to what is popularly termed "Spiritualism," asked me to try to obtain permission from the occupiers of the maisonnette we had vacated, to hold a nocturnal vigil there.

The occupants proved to be two ladies, and they refused me permission, on the grounds that the landlord of the house, being greatly annoyed at the rumours he had heard of its being haunted, had threatened anyone encouraging or spreading such rumours with an action for slander of title. After a little persuasion, however, I prevailed upon them to admit that they

had often heard ghostly footsteps and other sounds on the staircase and landings, and that on one occasion a friend of theirs had seen the ghost. They were having a small party one evening, and footsteps being heard ascending the staircase, one of the guests, a young man, went out on to the landing to see who was there. It was an old man with a white beard. He was then in the act of descending the stairs, and on the guest asking him if he wanted to see anyone, he replied, " Oh, it's all right," and went on. Something unusual about the old man induced the guest to follow him right down into the hall and to within a few feet of the front door, where he suddenly and inexplicably disappeared. The youthful guest then realized that he had seen a ghost.

It has been suggested that the old man was not a phantom of the dead at all, but a phantom or projection of some person alive at the time, possibly a former occupant of the house, who continually thought of it, picturing it in his mind so vividly that on certain occasions, when conditions were favourable, projection had taken place ; that is to say, his immaterial self or ego had detached itself from his material body and actually visited the spot he was visualizing.

Such an explanation may appear wild and improbable to many people, but it would seem to be the most, if not the only, feasible explanation in some well-known instances of hauntings. Whether it is the true explanation of the haunting in this particular house in Red Lion Square I cannot say, but I incline to the belief that it is not, and that the phenomena there are due to an altogether different cause.

CHAPTER IV

BLOOMSBURY

THE house in which I experienced ghostly footsteps is not the only house in Red Lion Square that is said to be haunted. Close to it is another house bearing a similarly unenviable reputation. It is believed that a girl was murdered on the staircase, and that the ghost alleged to be seen on the staircase and in certain of the rooms is hers. It is said, also, that a ghostly re-enaction of the tragedy, in which this girl played so unfortunate a rôle, takes place periodically: sounds of footsteps, sighing and groaning being heard in various parts of the house and on the stairs, and a scuffle, which always terminates in an ominous thud on the hall floor beneath. I believe many efforts have been made to lay the ghost, but as, I understand, the phenomena are still experienced, it is obvious that all such efforts have proved futile.

There is a rumour in the neighbourhood that the ghost of Oliver Cromwell occasionally parades up and down the Square garden at night, usually on very stormy nights. Some historians assert that soon after the Restoration, the bodies of Oliver Cromwell, Ireton and Bradshaw were disinterred at Westminster Abbey and dragged thence on sledges to Tyburn, where they were hung on gallows till sunset. They were then cut down, and decapitated. The trunks were thrown into a hole at the foot of the

gallows, while the heads were fixed on poles on the roof of Westminster Hall.

There are various traditions as to what subsequently became of the latter. Before being hanged at Tyburn, the bodies, according to one tradition, were taken to the Red Lion Inn at Holborn. Now some writers think the word Tyburn was not only applied to the spot at the north end of the Park, a spot that was situated in what was then styled Tyburn Lane, but that it was applied to any place in London where executions were of more or less frequent occurrence.

One such spot, about the time of the Restoration, occupied a prominent position in St. Giles's parish, close to where the thoroughfare now called Tottenham Court Road terminates; and another was so close to the site of Red Lion Square that one might, not unreasonably, conclude that it occupied the space that later became the Square garden, a conclusion which is borne out by the fact that for many years an obelisk, bearing the inscription, "OBTUSUM OBTUSIORIS INGENII MONUMENTUM. QUID ME RESPICIS, VIATOR? VADE", stood in the said garden.[1] Mr. Jesse, and the other writers referred to, were of the opinion that this inscription bore some cryptic reference to the bones of the three renegades that were interred in the garden, the obelisk being erected to mark the spot where they lie.

Granted the site of the Square garden was the Tyburn which witnessed the revolting exhibition of the mouldering remains, this theory that the remains were buried in the ground over which the obelisk was subsequently erected is extremely probable.

[1] *Vide* p. 546, vol. iv, *Old and New London*.

It certainly gained the credence of many people, who declared that the ghosts alleged to haunt the Square, more particularly the Square garden, were those of Cromwell, Ireton and Bradshaw. A story that was current in the immediate neighbourhood, during the Great War, came to my knowledge thus :

I was returning to my quarters in the Square, late one night, when I found a crowd of people, mostly foreigners, talking excitedly, just outside the Square garden. Thinking they were discussing the air raid which had taken place a few days before in that district, I halted, but the remark I was about to make on the damage it had done in Red Lion Street died upon my lips, as I caught the word ghosts, and I at once asked a swarthy-looking Italian, who might have been an organ-grinder or ice-cream vendor, what it referred to.

" Why," he said, in quite good English, " two women declare they have seen the ghosts that are supposed to haunt the Square," and he grinned.

" It is no laughing matter," a woman who was standing close to us exclaimed, angrily. " We did see them. Other people have seen them too."

" What were they like ? " I inquired.

" Three men, wearing long black cloaks and hats with old-fashioned high crowns and very wide brims," the woman replied. " My friend and I were passing the garden, just about where we are standing now, when we saw them suddenly cross the road in front of us. They were walking abreast, and passed right through the iron railings into the garden."

" How could they ? " someone asked, incredulously.

" Well, they did," the woman responded. " You

can ask my friend. We both saw them. They went through the railings, as if there were no railings there, and suddenly disappeared."

"That's right," her friend, the other woman, said, joining us. "Directly they had passed into the garden we lost sight of them. They vanished."

"There's nothing to laugh at," an old man remarked to a boy who was giggling. "I believe every word these ladies have said, for I've seen one or two equally queer things myself, though not here."

I asked him to tell me what they were, but he would not. He informed me, however, that the two women were by no means the only people who had had experiences of that sort in the Square, and he himself knew people who had seen the three men in the old-fashioned hats and cloaks.

"But that was years ago," he added, "about 1870. These three ghosts, or phantoms, or whatever else you may like to term them, only appear, it seems, either before or during some great war."

That was all the information I could extract, and as the crowd was now dispersing, I came away with the rest.

A house in Great James Street is haunted by ghostly noises, such as footsteps and creakings, and the phantom of a man who periodically visits a flat in it. A tenant of this particular flat told me of his experiences with this ghost.

One night he heard someone moving about in the sitting-room; footsteps then came into the bedroom, which communicates with the sitting-room by means of folding doors, and cautiously approached his bed. After a brief pause, during which he found himself

wholly incapable of action, hands groped their way surreptitiously over the bed-clothes towards his throat. The spell that had hitherto bound him was then fortunately broken, and he was able to dive under the bed-clothes, just in time to evade the hands that were about to clutch hold of him.

After an interval, which seemed a lifetime, the hands were removed, and the steps slowly retreated to the sitting-room, and thence on to the landing outside. Then and not till then did he sum up the courage to emerge from under the bed-clothes.

Once, he told me, a friend of his who was staying with him, returning home one night before him, found a strange man in the sitting-room. He was in evening dress, and had a white handkerchief bound round his face in such a manner that only his forehead was visible. However, although apparently blindfolded, the intruder, directly my friend's friend entered the sitting-room, passed through the folding doors into the bedroom beyond. My friend's friend immediately followed him, but the room was empty. He had disappeared, and disappeared most inexplicably, because there was no mode of exit from the room other than through the folding doors and a window, which was closed at the bottom, and was, besides, a great height from the ground, the flat being on the third floor.

This, I believe, is the only occasion on which a ghost has been seen during my friend's tenancy.

At my friend's wish, I went to the flat one evening, during his temporary absence, for the purpose of investigation. I was accompanied by a friend from Ceylon and an estate agent, whom I got to know

through consulting him at his office about buying a house, and who struck me as being singularly level-headed and rational. The three of us sat in the dark, or rather without any artificial light, on the staircase.

For a long time nothing happened, and we were beginning to think we had drawn a blank, when, quite suddenly, footsteps came running up the stairs towards us. The moonlight, pouring in a brilliant white stream through a window on the staircase, lighted up the whole of the flight immediately facing us, and yet, though the footsteps now were close to us, we could see no one. When they reached the stair immediately below the one I was standing on they halted, and I was conscious of being scrutinized intently by some presence, which, although invisible, was intensely real.

The estate agent, now being badly scared, switched on the light, whereupon my uncanny sensation ceased, and the presence in front of me ceased, so to say, with it. We came away soon afterwards, my friends having had quite enough of it for one night.

In Cartwright Gardens, not far from Great James Street, there are at least two houses reputed to be haunted. Years ago, Cartwright Gardens was known as Burton Crescent. It is said to have changed its name in consequence of two murders that gained it a very unenviable notoriety. The first occurred in the winter of 1878. A lodger returning to No. 4 Burton Crescent, late one day in December of that year, found his landlady, Mrs. Samuels, lying on the kitchen floor in a pool of blood. Her head had been beaten in by repeated blows.

Mary Donovan, a charwoman who had worked for

Mrs. Samuels, was arrested on the charge of murdering her, but acquitted by Mr. Flowers, the magistrate before whom she was brought, on the grounds that there was not sufficient evidence to warrant him committing her for trial.

His speech in court seemed strangely contradictory. "I am of the opinion, however," he said, "that the evidence against you, although there are many facts in it which would point you out as having committed that offence (*i.e.* the murder of Mrs. Samuels), is not such as to justify me in placing you on your trial."

One wonders why, if there were so many facts pointing to her having killed Mrs. Samuels, he did not commit her for trial. A good deal of dissatisfaction was expressed at his verdict, and such undesirable publicity did the house acquire on account of the murder and alleged subsequent haunting that its number was finally changed.

Six years later the Crescent again came into notoriety through another crime, also destined to remain an unsolved mystery. Anne Yeats, a pretty girl of the unfortunate class, was found one day in March, 1884, in a back room on the first floor of No. 12 Burton Crescent, strangled. The crime, which in several respects resembled the Great Coram Street murder of 1872, was never brought home to anyone. As in the case of the Samuels mystery, the house gained such an unenviable reputation, not only on account of the murder, but also on account of the ghostly manifestations that, according to rumour, were subsequently experienced there, that its number was changed; and soon afterwards Burton Crescent was rechristened Cartwright Gardens. For many years now it has

enjoyed complete immunity—at least so far as is generally known—from any unpleasant happenings.

I have alluded to the Great Coram Street murder. Few crimes created a more painful sensation. The story of it, in brief, was this.

On Christmas morning, 1872, Harriet Buswell, a pretty ballet girl of loose character, was found in a back room on the second floor of No. 12 Great Coram Street (twelve would seem to be a sinister number, it has figured in several very horrible crimes) with her throat cut.

A strange man was seen to enter the room with her late on Christmas Eve, and the police arrested Dr. Gottfried Hessel, believing him to be that individual. He was proved, however, not to have left his hotel that night, and he was consequently acquitted. The real murderer was never brought to justice, and the crime is still one of the many unsolved London mysteries. So great a notoriety did Great Coram Street acquire on account of it, that its name was forthwith altered to Coram Street, while all the houses in it were renumbered. For years, however, the house in which the murder was believed to have taken place was reputed haunted, and a back room in it, on the second floor, so rumour asserted, was kept locked, because of the unearthly sounds that were heard at night proceeding from it.

One of the best authenticated cases of a phantom of the living occurred in the British Museum in the year 1888.[1] On Thursday, 12th April of that year, Dr. W. Wynn Westcott, the well-known coroner, made an appointment to meet the Rev. T. W. Lemon

[1] *Twenty Years of Psychical Research*, by Ed. T. Bennett.

and Mr. A. B. in the Reading Room of the British Museum the following morning, at a quarter to eleven. When Friday morning came, however, Dr. Westcott was laid up in bed with a feverish catarrh and unable, in consequence, to keep his appointment.

Just about the time he should have been there, Ryan, one of the umbrella attendants, who knew him well by sight, saw him walk past and enter the Reading Room. Some minutes later, Mrs. Salmon, a friend of the doctor's, saw him walking about the Reading Room, as if inquiring for someone, and then take his customary seat. She was so sure it was the doctor, that, on Mr. A. B. asking her if she had seen him, she said, Yes, and told Mr. A. B. where to find him. He went to the seat she mentioned, but no doctor was there. Indeed, at that hour he was, as I have said, in bed at home, suffering from a severe catarrh.

Granted that it was not someone very like him Mrs. Salmon and Ryan had seen, who or what was it? Dr. Westcott was, naturally, thinking very earnestly of his assignation and deploring his friend's disappointment at his inability to keep it. Hence, is it not feasible to suppose, that, the conditions being favourable, projection had taken place; that is to say that the doctor's immaterial self or ego, detaching itself from his material body, had actually visited the spot he was mentally visualizing? What Mrs. Salmon and Ryan had seen was, consequently, a phantom of the living.

Mrs. Salmon's testimony to the incident in the Museum is as follows:

"Mr. A. B. asked me if I had seen Dr. Westcott. I said, 'Yes, about five minutes ago; and he is sitting where he usually sits.' Mr. A. B. went to the seat,

and came and told me Dr. Westcott was not there. I said, ' Oh, he must be ; it's only a few minutes since I saw him sit down.' I went myself. He was not to be seen. I went to the man who takes the umbrellas and said, ' Have you seen Dr. Westcott ? ' ' Yes,' he said, ' he went into the room about five minutes ago.' This is exactly what took place.

ELLEN SALMON."

January 24th, 1898.

This testimony was subsequently published.

The case is not, perhaps, more credible than one which happened in Newquay, Cornwall, oddly enough in August of the same year. I sent an account of it to the Society for Psychical Research, and the account, verbatim, was published in their *Journal* in the autumn of 1899.

In brief, what happened was this : A young boy at the time, I was spending my holidays in Newquay. The house in which I, together with my family, stayed, was a moderately-sized apartment house. There were no other lodgers, but we had a friend staying with us, a Miss D—— from Birmingham.

One morning, she and my eldest sister went out to do some shopping in the town. About half an hour later my two other sisters, my old nurse and myself were in the hall. I was on the staircase leading into it. Suddenly Miss D—— appeared on the staircase, just above where I was standing. Down she came, passing so close to me—it was a narrow staircase—that I felt her dress brush against me, into the hall. Without looking at my sisters and my nurse, who were staring at her in astonishment, as they had seen her go out shortly before, she entered the sitting-room, closing the door behind her. My sisters and I at once opened

it. The room was empty, save for the furniture, and there was no trace of Miss D—— anywhere.

At the time we had all four seen her, or what we all took to be her, she and my eldest sister were in the town shopping. Presumably, what we had seen was her projection.[1]

To quote another haunting connected with the British Museum. Everyone knows of the unlucky mummy case there, but it is not everyone who has heard of Katebit. Katebit was, so I understand, in her lifetime a priestess of the College of Amen (Amun) ra, which was founded at Thebes, during the eighteenth dynasty of the new empire, in honour of the god Amun ; and she was, presumably, deemed of sufficient importance to have her body mummified, and, thus preserved, deposited in some Egyptian catacomb. Some British Goth taking her thence brought her to England, and she now resides (*N.B.* not rests) in the Oriental Department of the British Museum. I say resides instead of rests, because, if there be any truth in certain rumours, she is very far from resting. Every now and then ladies testify to seeing her head move, and some go so far as to suggest she walks at night.

Some time ago I asked an official on duty in the Oriental Department if he had ever seen or heard anything uncanny there, but he would not commit himself.

"Some people say they have," he persisted, and that is all I could get out of him.

On one occasion I had rather a strange experience there myself. I was looking at Katebit, wondering what she was like in her lifetime, when I heard a slight

[1] She is still living. She subsequently married and has a son at Eton.

cough immediately behind me. I turned round, but could see no one near me. After a little while I heard another cough, rather too near me to be pleasant, but again, on turning round, I could see no one. This I thought very strange. However, I should, in all probability, have attributed it to some peculiarity of the acoustic properties of the Museum, but for the fact that, as I was descending the staircase into the entrance hall, I again heard the cough, this time almost in my ear. Its origin seemed perfectly plain to me then, and I have not visited the Oriental Department of this Museum since.

CHAPTER V

BLOOMSBURY (CONTINUED) AND WESTMINSTER

QUITE one of the most remarkable psychic phenomena connected with Bloomsbury, or, indeed, with any part of London, are "The Brothers' Footsteps." Fortunately, several authentic accounts of them are still on record. The following is an extract from an article in *Notes and Queries* by Dr. E. F. Rimbault:

"The fields behind Montagu House were, from about the year 1680, until towards the end of the last century, the scenes of robbery, murder and every species of depravity and wickedness of which the heart can think. They appear to have been originally called the 'Long Fields,' and afterwards (about Strype's time) the Southampton Fields. These fields remained waste and useless with the exception of some nursery grounds near the new road to the north, and a piece of ground enclosed for the Toxophilite Society towards the north-west, near the back of Gower Street. The remainder was the resort of depraved wretches, whose amusements consisted chiefly in fighting pitched battles and other disorderly sports, especially on Sundays. Tradition had given to the superstition of that period a legendary story, of the period of the Duke of Monmouth's Rebellion, of two brothers, who fought in this field so ferociously as to destroy each other; ever since when their footsteps, formed from the

vengeful struggle, were said to remain, with the indentations produced by their advancing and receding; nor could any grass or vegetable ever be produced where these footsteps were thus displayed. This extraordinary area was said to be at the extreme termination of the north-east end of Upper Montagu Street.... The latest account of these footsteps, previous to their being built over, with which I am acquainted, is the following, which I have extracted from one of Joseph Moser's Commonplace Books:

"'June 16, 1800. Went into the fields at the back of Montagu House, and there saw, for the last time, the "forty footsteps," the building material all there ready to cover them from the sight of man. I counted more than forty, but they might be the footprints of the workmen.'

"This extract is valuable, as it establishes the period of the final obliteration of the footsteps, and also confirms the legend that forty was the original number."

Another account of them appeared in the *Arminian Magazine* for 1781. It runs thus: "I think it would be worth your while to take a view of those wonderful marks of the Lord's hatred to duelling called 'The Brothers' Steps.' They are in the fields, about a third of a mile northward from Montagu House, and the awful tradition concerning them is this:—Two brothers quarrelled about a worthless woman, and, according to the fashions of those days, fought with a sword and pistol. The prints of their feet are about the depth of three metres, and nothing will vegetate, so much as to disfigure them. The number is only eighty-three, but probably some are at present filled

up, for I think they were formerly more in the centre, where each unhappy combatant wounded the other to death, and a bank, on which the first who fell died, retains the form of his agonizing couch, by the curse of barrenness, while grass flourishes all about it.

"Mr. George Hall, who was the Librarian of Lincoln's Inn, first showed me these steps twenty-eight years ago, when I think they were not quite so deep as now. He remembered them about thirty years, and the man who first showed them him about thirty years more; which goes back to the year 1692; but I suppose they originated in King Charles II's reign. My mother well remembered their being ploughed up, and corn sown to deface them, about fifty years ago. But all was labour in vain; for the prints returned in a while to their pristine form, as probably will those that are now filled up."

This article bears the signature J. W., and commenting on it the Editor of the magazine says, "This account appeared to me so very extraordinary that I knew not what to think of it. I knew Mr. W. to be a person of good understanding and real piety; but still I wanted more witnesses; till a while ago, being at Mr. Cary's, in Copt-hall Buildings, I occasionally mentioned 'The Brothers' Footsteps,' and asked the company if they had heard anything of them. 'Sir,' said Mr. Cary, 'sixteen years ago I saw and counted them myself.' Another added, 'And I saw them four years ago.' I could then no longer doubt but they had been, and a week or two after I went with Mr. Cary and another person to seek them. We sought for nearly half an hour in vain, we could find no steps

at all within a quarter of a mile, no, nor half a mile of Montagu House. We were almost out of hope, when an honest man, who was at work, directed us to the next ground, adjoining to a pond. There we found what we sought, about three-quarters of a mile north of Montagu House and five hundred yards east of Tottenham Court Road. The steps answer Mr. W.'s description. They are of the size of a large human foot, about three inches deep, and lie nearly from north-east to south-west. We counted only seventy-six; but we were not exact in counting. The place where one or both brothers are supposed to have fallen is still bare of grass. The labourer also showed us the bank where (the tradition is) the wretched woman sat to see the combat.

"What should we say of these things? Why to atheists, or infidels of any kind, I would not say one word about them. For 'if they hear not Moses and the prophets' they will not regard anything of this kind. But to men of candour, who believe the Bible to be of God, I would say, Is not this an astonishing instance, held forth to all the inhabitants of London, of the justice and power of God? Does not the curse He has denounced upon this ground bear some resemblance to that of Our Lord on the barren fig-tree? I see no reason nor pretence for any rational man to doubt the truth of the story, since it has been confirmed by these open visible tokens for more than a hundred years successively."

Jane and Anna Maria Porter weaved a novel round the tradition of this famous field. According to their story, the two brothers fought on different sides of the Duke of Monmouth's ill-fated Rebellion, and in

the duel, which was fought in Southampton Fields, both were killed. Apropos of this novel and the mysterious footsteps, the following article appeared in the *Book for a Rainy Day* :

" Of these steps there are many traditionary stories ; the one generally believed is that two brothers were in love with a lady, who would not declare a preference for either, but coolly sat upon a bank, to witness the termination of a duel, which proved fatal to both. The bank, it is said, on which she sat, and the foot-marks of the brothers, when pacing the ground, never produced grass again. The fact is," the somewhat sceptical writer of the article remarks, " that these steps were so often trodden that it was impossible for the grass to grow. I have frequently passed over them; they were in a field on the site of Mr. Martin's Chapel, or very nearly so, and not on the spot as communicated to Miss Porter, who has written an entertaining novel on the subject."

To continue. If rumour can be credited, in addition to these notorious footprints, Southampton Fields can point to other ghostly happenings, for in them, on Hallow E'en and other particularly uncanny nights of the year, when youths and maidens used to foregather there, to work the spells peculiar to the occasion, some alarming phantom would frequently appear, scaring the rash experimenters almost out of their senses. In my opinion, some of the strange happenings that take place in the British Museum and certain of the houses in the immediate neighbourhood are due to tragedies that occurred in these long since vanished fields. My reference to the Museum in the above case of haunting reminds me of another haunt-

ing by a phantom. My authority is the late Mr. Robert Dale Owen.[1]

In the summer of 1857, a certain Colonel, whom I shall designate A——, his wife and infant child were residing in a house facing Woolwich Common, when one night Mrs. A——, after she had retired to bed and apparently been sound asleep, suddenly became conscious of standing by her bedside, looking at her material body, which was lying next to that of her sleeping husband. Her first idea was that she was dead, and as she looked at her face, which appeared waxy and quite colourless compared with the ruddy, healthy countenance of her husband, her idea became a conviction. She had obviously passed away in her sleep and was now a disembodied spirit. For a few moments she experienced a sensation of relief that her death had been painless, but when she thought of her family and friends, and how terribly shocked and grieved they would be at her so sudden and unexpected demise, she was overwhelmed with sorrow. While she was thus occupied, she suddenly felt herself borne by some irresistible force towards the wall of the room, and she was momentarily expecting a collision with it, when, to her astonishment and relief, she passed right through it into the open air beyond. In front of her and directly in her path was a great tree. This she also passed through, as if it were nothing material. Still impelled forward by a power she was utterly unable to control or resist, she soon found herself on the far side of Woolwich Common, close to the main entrance of the Repository. In front of the building was a sentry, but though she passed close to him, he appar-

[1] See *Footfalls on the Boundary of Another World*, by Robert Dale Owen.

ently did not see her. A little way on, and she passed another sentry, with the same result. Then she heard a clock strike three, and immediately afterwards found herself in the bedroom of Mrs. M——, a friend of hers, who lived at Greenwich. She was conscious of commencing a conversation with her about something, what she could not afterwards recollect, when everything suddenly became a blank, and she knew no more till she found herself in bed at home. It was then morning and the sun was pouring cheerily into the room. With the recollection of what she had gone through still fresh in her mind, she exclaimed, "So I am not dead, after all." Her husband, who was preparing to get up, asked her what she meant, and she immediately told him her experience. He was much impressed and asked her not to say a word about it for the present to Mrs. M——, who had been invited to stay with them, and would be arriving in a few days' time. Two days later, Mrs. M—— came and was walking in the garden with them, when the conversation turned, as it so often does when ladies are present, on dress. "My new bonnet is trimmed with violet," Mrs. A—— observed. "I like the colour so much I shall always choose it for my bonnets in future."

"I guessed it was your favourite colour," Mrs. M—— replied, "because you were dressed entirely in violet when you paid me a visit the night before last."

"Paid you a visit the night before last?" Mrs. A—— ejaculated. "Are you sure I did?"

"Yes, quite sure," Mrs. M—— said. "You appeared to me at about three o'clock; and we talked together for some minutes. Have you no recollection of it?"

Deeply interested, Mrs. A—— then narrated her experience to Mrs. M——, and all three (Colonel and Mrs. A—— and Mrs. M——) agreed that it must have been brought about by some superphysical agency.

In my own opinion it is merely another indication that phenomena can be produced by the living mind, and that all phenomena are not necessarily due to, or associated with, those who have passed over. Very possibly Mrs. A——, while apparently asleep, or in an actual dream state, was thinking very intently of her friend Mrs. M——, and the right measure of concentration being acquired and other conditions, at present unknown to us, being favourable, projection had taken place. Thus what Mrs. M—— had seen and spoken to was nothing more or less than the phantasm or ghost of her living friend. I believe that many so-called hauntings are thus attributable to the living. In conclusion, Mr. Dale Owen depended on no hearsay evidence for this story. It was told him by Colonel A—— and confirmed, some days later, by Mrs. M——.

An experience that once happened to a lady in the Argyll Rooms,[1] London, might either have been due to a phantasm of the living, to a phantasm of the dead, or to some unknown power associated with the superphysical world.

For the sake of those who know little of old London, the Argyll Rooms were at the corner of Little Argyll Street, a turning out of Oxford Street, only a step or two from Oxford Circus. They were founded by Colonel Greville, a well-known "man about town" during the Regency, and speedily became a rival to the fashionable Pantheon and Almack's. Everyone with

[1] See *Footfalls on the Boundary of Another World.*

any pretension at all to being in Society visited these three centres of the Smart Set during the season. It was here the eccentric Lady Margaret Crawford gave a ball to her enemies, or those she deemed such; and here, some years later, the famous contralto, Velluti, gave a concert to a packed house.

The psychic incident I have referred to as having taken place in the Argyll Rooms is this:

One evening, a year or two before the rooms were destroyed by fire, a certain Miss M—— went to a concert there with a party of friends. During the performance, she became so agitated and looked so ill, that her friends thought it advisable to take her home. For some time she refused to say what was the matter with her, but at last, on being pressed, she declared she had had a very terrible experience. At the concert she had suddenly become conscious of a naked body lying on the floor at her feet. The face was partly covered with a cloak, but, despite this, she recognized the features as those of her friend Sir J—— Y——. Her friends tried to pacify her, assuring her it was only imagination, but they tried in vain. She was positive Sir J—— Y—— had been the victim of some fatal accident, and that what she had seen was his wraith. Her surmises proved to be correct, for, on the following day, she received the news of Sir J—— Y——'s death. He had been drowned in the Southampton river through the overturning of his boat, at the very time she had seen what she believed to be his wraith. Moreover, it was ascertained that those who found his body had covered it with a cloak, leaving the face partially exposed.

Basil N. Hill, an elderly actor, whom I used to meet

occasionally in the old Lounge in Maiden Lane, once had a curious experience in the Royal Aquarium, which is a mere name to the present generation, who probably place it in the same category as Almack's and the Argyll Rooms. In my youth it was a very live place, a place where one could go in the afternoon or evening and be sure of an interesting entertainment. There was always something on, a play, or pantomime, or concert in the Imperial Theatre, which joined its western extremity, and numerous side-shows in other parts of the building. Its decease, which, I believe, was due to certain kill-joys, who prefer to see evil in almost every kind of amusement, was deplored by thousands, and has left a gap in London which has never been adequately filled.

To return, however, to Basil Hill. One day, when very down and out, he wandered on to the Thames Embankment, with the thought of suicide uppermost in his mind. Hence, he was peering over the wall into the murky, moonlit water beneath, when someone touched him on the shoulder. It was a brother actor named Bert (I don't know his surname, for Hill never mentioned it to me), equally down and out. He, too, had wandered on to the Embankment, with the same object in view.

While they were talking the matter over, wondering whether death by drowning was very painful and if the Powers on the Other Side—provided there was another side—would punish them for taking their own lives, a policeman, who had been standing a little way off, watching them for some time, came up to them and said, " Here's a bob for you, boys. It's all I can afford. Better that, however, than the river," and he slipped a shilling into Basil Hill's hand.

"How did you know we were thinking of jumping in?" Hill asked him.

"By your appearance," the constable replied. "Anyone like me, who is used to the Embankment, can always tell a real down and out. There are plenty of sham ones, but you two have the genuine desperate look, which usually means the river. Since I have been on this beat I've seen several suicides, and saved probably a score or more from jumping in. Get a bit of grub and something warm to drink with that money, and, maybe, your luck will turn in the morning."

Much touched at the policeman's kindness, both men promised to do as he suggested. On their way to a coffee stall to get some food, they agreed to meet on Waterloo Bridge the following evening, at midnight, and jump into the river together, if they had had no luck. After devouring some sandwiches and coffee with considerable avidity, neither of them having tasted food for many hours, they parted company, renewing their pledge to meet one another, on the aforesaid bridge, in twenty-four hours' time. What remained of the night Hill spent under the Covent Garden arches.

He was wandering in the direction of Poverty Corner in the morning, when he ran into another actor friend, who happened to have just got a part in a touring company.

"They're still looking for someone to play a parson's part, Basil," he said, "and you're just the man for it. Come along to the rehearsal room at eleven sharp and I'll introduce you, but get a shave and tidy up first."

With the good nature that is so characteristic of actors who have been through it themselves, he lent

Hill half a sovereign, and Hill, taking his advice, made himself look a little more presentable, and got the part. His friend offered him a bed, and he was having a merry time of it that evening, till he suddenly remembered his promise to Bert. Telling his friend he had an urgent appointment but would soon be back, he hurried, as fast as he could, to Waterloo Bridge.

When he arrived there, it was a quarter past twelve, and being a wet night the bridge was deserted. He waited there for some time, and finally concluding something had prevented Bert from coming, perhaps he, too, had had a stroke of luck, or had met with an accident, he came away.

The following evening he went to the Aquarium, to meet another friend he had run into on his way to the eleven o'clock rehearsal that morning. He was walking about, waiting for him, when, to his astonishment, he suddenly saw Bert, standing in an entrance to one of the side-shows, looking fixedly at him. He walked towards him, with the intention of asking him how he came to be there and what had happened to him the previous night, and was within a few paces of him, when he, suddenly and very mysteriously, disappeared. A few minutes later, and Hill again saw Bert, this time in another part of the hall; and, as before, Bert was gazing fixedly at him. Then, as their eyes met, Bert beckoned to him. Determined that he should not elude him again, Hill made for Bert at once, and was close to him, when, again, to his utter amazement, Bert disappeared.

Much puzzled, Hill was wondering whether he was the victim of a hallucination or an illusion of some kind or another, when the friend he had come to meet

arrived, and for the next hour or two he thought no more of the incident.

As he was leaving the building with his friend, Bert passed him by in the street, and, turning round, again looked at him with the same strange fixed expression.

" Excuse me a minute," Hill remarked to his friend, " but I must speak to that fellow." He hurried after him and had almost overtaken him, when, for the third time, Bert disappeared. There was no crowd now with which he might possibly have mingled, or doorway through which he might possibly have slipped, and thus have escaped detection, there was just the pavement, deserted on account of the heavy rain. Hill had seen him on the pavement one moment, and the next moment he had seen nothing. Bert had inexplicably and unquestionably vanished.

A feeling of intense eeriness now came over Hill, and when he rejoined his friend, he was shaking all over, so much so that his friend asked him if he had seen a ghost, to which he replied huskily :

" Yes, it undoubtedly was a ghost."

The following morning he went to a Free Library and scanned the papers. One of the first headlines that caught his eye was—" Man's body found in the Thames," and under it he read that the body of the man who had been seen to jump from Waterloo Bridge, at midnight, on Monday—it was at that hour and night he had arranged to meet Bert—had been found on the mud, at low water, and subsequently identified as that of an out-of-work actor.

I had the story direct from Basil Hill, on whom the ghastly incident and tragedy left a very deep impression.

It seems that prior to the building of the Royal Aquarium there stood, close to its site, some very old buildings, one of which, an apartment house, had probably been in existence for at least four hundred years. My authority,[1] whom, for convenience, I will call Mr. B——, had been lodging in this old apartment house for about three months, when he had the following experience.

One night, having been to the theatre, it was late when he retired to bed. His room, which was long and narrow, and gloomy, even on the brightest days, was oak panelled throughout. Though he had not, so far, experienced anything unpleasant in it, he had been conscious of a something rather ominous and depressing in its atmosphere. On this particular night he had barely extinguished the light and got into bed, when he saw a strange sight. A young man, clad in the picturesque dress of the days of Charles II, emerged from the panelled wall opposite him. His doublet, embroidered with gold lace, his full, loose breeches, richly bedizened with bunches of gaily-coloured ribbons, and russet boots with broad ornamented tops, his handsome travelling cloak that reached from his shoulders to his heels and hung in folds over his left arm, and black feathered hat worn jauntily over long glossy curls, that fell about his neck and shoulders, plainly showed him to be someone of rank and distinction. Apart from the pallor of his cheeks, which, contrasting as it did with the blackness of his hair, was ghastly in the extreme, his expression and general appearance was singularly mild and pleasing.

[1] *News from the Invisible World.* Edited by T. Charley.

Mr. B—— does not explain how, after he had extinguished the light, he was able to note all these details, but, presumably, either the room was illuminated by moonlight, or, as is so often the case in haunting, the ghost emitted a light of its own.

As Mr. B—— was gazing at it, spellbound, it raised its hat with its right hand, and displayed a terrible wound in the centre of its forehead. It then made signs and gesticulations, as if desirous of warning Mr. B—— against some impending danger, and walking towards him, with a curious gliding motion, fixed its dark piercing eyes on him for fully a minute, after which it slowly retired to the wall, where it stood for several minutes, as if praying, and then sank into the floor, and disappeared.

As may be imagined, Mr. B—— did not sleep much, that night, and in the morning, greatly to his landlord's apparent astonishment, he asked for his bill, paid it and quitted the premises for good.

Some days later, he met the landlord in Hyde Park, and pressed him into confessing that the house, particularly the room he, Mr. B——, had occupied, was well known to be haunted by the ghost of a young Cavalier, who was reputed to have been murdered there in the reign of Charles II. During the time he, the landlord, had rented the house, nine people had refused to remain in the room, on account of the strange things they had heard and seen in it.

Several ghosts are said to haunt various houses in the Buckingham Palace Road. Unlike the majority of their ilk, one of them performs such really useful

actions as lighting the fire,[1] sweeping the carpets, dusting the furniture, and putting on the kettle; and it is so considerate of people's feelings and averse from giving them a shock, that it invariably remains invisible.

Another ghost in the same road is not so kindly disposed. A Miss Stanhope, who had once occupied a flat in the house, told me that she had often heard sounds in the kitchen, as if someone was there, moving about the fire-irons and cleaning the range, but she never saw anything alarming till one morning, upon going into the kitchen unusually early, she was surprised to see a strange maid kneeling on the floor, in front of the range, apparently intent on cleaning it. She was wearing one of the little flat lace caps servants used to wear many years ago and a pink calico dress. Thinking that her daily woman was ill and had sent someone in her place, Miss Stanhope exclaimed, "Who are you, why are you here?" whereupon the girl turned round, and Miss Stanhope saw her face for the first time. It was ghastly white and the large dark eyes had such a mad glitter in them that Miss Stanhope sprang back in alarm. The girl then got up and, with a horrible grin, crept towards Miss Stanhope, who shrieked with terror. Fortunately at this juncture there was the sound of a key being inserted in the front door of the flat, and, upon Miss Stanhope's woman entering, the strange girl turned round and ran into the back kitchen, closing the door behind her. Miss Stanhope, who was nearly dead with fright, explained what had happened, and begged her woman to fetch a policeman. Her woman, however, being

[1] See *Ghostly Visitors*, by "Spectre Stricken," p. 58.

both physically strong and strong-minded, marched to the back kitchen door, opened it and looked inside. No one was there, and there was no way out, save through a skylight, twelve feet from the floor.

Rather than risk a second encounter with this most unpleasant ghost, Miss Stanhope forthwith left the flat.

CHAPTER VI

LINCOLN'S INN, THE TEMPLE, GREYFRIARS, CHARTERHOUSE, ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S THE GREAT, AND NEWGATE

BOTH Lincoln's Inn and the Temple have their ghosts. According to tradition, the former was at one time visited by the most alarming and ill-omened spectre.

About the end of the seventeenth century, Robert Perceval, second son of the Right Honourable Sir John Perceval, had chambers in the Inn. He was reading for the law, but, apparently, spent much of the time he should have given to his studies in riotous and unprofitable pursuits. One night, when, yielding to a fit of industry, he did happen to be at his books, he was diverted from them by the sound of a clock, somewhere in the building, very sonorously striking the hour of midnight, and, upon looking round, he saw, to his amazement and no little alarm, a tall figure standing in front of the door. It was enveloped from head to foot in a long flowing black garment, which gave it a curiously uncanny appearance. Wondering who it could be, but supposing it to be some friend or acquaintance of his who had come in noiselessly, with the intention of frightening him, young Perceval rose from his chair and said rather angrily, for he resented the intrusion, "Who are you?" There was no reply, only a silence that had something very dis-

turbing as well as disconcerting about it. Then the figure gave a hollow, mocking laugh. Convinced now that it was some acquaintance enjoying a joke at his expense, Perceval snatched up his sword from a chair, near at hand, and rushing at the stranger thrust at him with it. The sword, apparently, passed through the stranger without encountering any resistance, and when Perceval withdrew it, it was clean. There was not even a spot of blood on it.

Meanwhile, the stranger stood like a statue, absolutely silent and motionless.

Greatly puzzled, but determined to solve the mystery, Perceval made a sudden snatch at the stranger's garment and tore it from him. Then he reeled back in horror, for the figure confronting him was an exact counterpart of himself, dead, with ghastly wounds on his head and breast. The sight so shocked him that he swooned. On recovering and looking round the room fearfully, he again saw the phantom. It was standing silent and motionless, in the same spot, but, as he looked at it, it turned slowly round and noiselessly left the room.

Believing its visit to him to be a warning, Perceval became a reformed character for some time, sticking to his work and shunning his usual gay and dissolute companions. However, as time went on and nothing happened, he came to the conclusion that there was no significance attached to his strange experience, and growing reckless, he again plunged, even deeper than formerly, into the fast life of the city. His indulgence in all kinds of excesses culminated in a quarrel with Beau Fielding, then at the zenith of his notoriety, and various other libertines, certain of whom evinced the

greatest hostility to him; and as he was making for a tavern in the Strand, one day, he felt, instinctively, he was being followed. Hence, he turned round sharply, and, on doing so, saw a sinister-looking man close at his heels, obviously intent on waylaying him. Upon his asking the man who he was and why he was following him, he was rudely told that he was not being followed and that he had better mind his own business. Unconvinced and apprehensive, as he did not like the appearance of the man at all, he crossed the road and tried to elude him. It was in vain, however; the man still followed him, and presently another, equally forbidding-looking ruffian, joined him! Though a rip, Perceval was no coward, and coming to a sudden halt he drew his sword and faced his pursuers. A fight ensued. Thanks to his excellent swordsmanship, Perceval put the ruffians to flight, but was, himself, wounded in the leg. The sight of the blood trickling down his clothes reminded him ominously of the phantom that had visited him in Lincoln's Inn, and he staggered back to his quarters faint and depressed. He told certain of his friends he was doomed. And he was right, for that night a watchman groping his way near the maypole in the Strand stumbled over his dead body.

Few, if any, knew how he met his death; he may have been murdered, but no one was apprehended, and the matter remains a mystery to this day.

According to tradition, Perceval's rooms in Lincoln's Inn were subsequently haunted by divers alarming phenomena, including a figure, smeared with blood and closely resembling him; and, if there is

any truth in rumour, these disturbances and manifestations are still, periodically, repeated.

Several hauntings are attributed to the Temple, but I can hear of none that has been experienced there lately. Tradition somewhat vaguely affirms that during the seventeenth century a duel took place in certain chambers of the Temple. It does not tell us even vaguely what the duel was about, but it asserts unequivocally that one of the combatants was killed, and that ever since this tragedy the room in which it occurred has been haunted, a ghostly re-enaction of the duel taking place there at certain times and seasons.

A tragedy that might well account for certain other ghostly happenings, said to occur occasionally in the Temple, was the butchery there of Mrs. Dunscomb, her companion and her maid.

In February, 1732, an old lady, Mrs. Lydia Dunscomb, with her elderly companion, Miss Elizabeth Harrison, and maid, Anne Price, a girl of about seventeen years of age, occupied rooms in Tanfield Court, a mere passage which once existed at the east side of the Temple. On Thursday, 2nd February, 1732, a certain Mrs. Frances Rhymer, whom Mrs. Dunscomb had made her executrix, went to Mrs. Dunscomb's to tea and to talk business with her. After tea Mrs. Dunscomb asked Mrs. Rhymer to open her cash-box and give her a guinea from it, as she had a small debt to pay. Mrs. Rhymer complied, and noticed the box contained a silver tankard, a number of loose sovereigns and a bag containing more. Altogether a considerable sum.

The following day Mrs. Oliphant, a laundress, had

occasion to call on Mrs. Dunscomb, and, on arriving, found her seated in her parlour with Mrs. Love, an old friend, and Elizabeth Harrison. However, despite congenial company, both Mrs. Dunscomb and Elizabeth seemed curiously depressed, and the latter remarked to Mrs. Oliphant that Mrs. Dunscomb had a presentiment she was going to die shortly and wanted her, Elizabeth Harrison, to die with her. This was said in the presence of Sarah Malcolm, a singularly handsome young charwoman, whom Mrs. Dunscomb employed, and Mrs. Oliphant noticed that, as it was said, Sarah Malcolm's face underwent a sudden change, and that, subsequently, she kept on glancing furtively at a large black box, on a cabinet, in one corner of the room, namely, Mrs. Dunscomb's cash-box.

At nine o'clock on Sunday morning Mrs. Love went to Mrs. Dunscomb's rooms and knocked on the outside door. No one came. She knocked again, louder; and, no one coming, she knocked yet again, louder still, and kept on knocking. Then she fetched Mrs. Oliphant, and they both knocked. Still no one came, and the silence that ensued had in it something so scaring that the two women decided to go for a locksmith to open the door, and were about to do so, when Sarah Malcolm joined them.

At their suggestion Sarah Malcolm then set off to fetch the locksmith, but soon returned, saying the locksmith was not at home. This was upsetting, but Mrs. Oliphant, having recovered from her scare, climbed into the house through one of the windows. Presently, the two women, waiting outside, heard a piercing scream, followed by a sudden stampede, and, almost simultaneously, the front door was flung open

by Mrs. Oliphant, who, with a face aflame with excitement, cried out, " Gracious God ! Oh, gracious God ! They're all murdered ! "[1]

What she said proved to be correct. Mrs. Dunscomb and Elizabeth Harrison had been strangled, a cord having been tied with terrible ferocity round their respective necks, while Anne Price, the maid, with her throat cut, was also lying on the floor, dead. Blood and signs of a desperate struggle were in evidence everywhere, and the black box containing the tankard and sovereigns had been rifled. The missing tankard being found in the chambers of a Mr. Kerrol, for whom Sarah Malcolm worked, wrapped up in bloodstained garments belonging to her, roused suspicion against her. She was searched, and twenty-three guineas and various articles of jewellery and clothes belonging to Mrs. Dunscomb were found on her. She was charged with both murders and arrested. When she was lodged in Newgate, fifty-three more guineas were found cunningly concealed in her hair, which was neatly plaited, and very long and beautiful.

She confessed to a share in the robbery, but denied any participation in the murders, which she attributed to two of her young male acquaintances, named Alexander, and a girl named Mary Tracey. Fortunately for these three they were able to prove their innocence, and Sarah Malcolm, alone, was tried. She was found guilty and hanged in Fleet Street, opposite Mitre Court, on the 7th of March, 1733.

At her execution the crowd was so immense, for the murders created an almost unparalleled sensation,

[1] *The Modern Newgate Calendar.* Published by Milner & Co., Ltd., 1868.

that one spectator, a woman—as usual there were more women at this show than men—was able to cross the street on the shoulders of those assembled there. She did this amid roars of laughter and much cheering.

For her execution Sarah Malcolm wore a black dress, and her cheeks and lips contrasting with it were so bright a red that they looked as if they were painted. She held herself erect, and walked almost jauntily to the scaffold, although, on arriving there, she fainted, and was a long time coming round. She died, according to some accounts, penitent, and was buried in the churchyard of St. Sepulchre's, where no criminal had been permitted burial for at least 150 years. It is said that this privilege was accorded her on account of her beauty, but whether this was so or not, such notoriety did she acquire, on account of her crimes and looks, that, two days before her execution, Hogarth obtained special permission to paint her. She wore scarlet, a very significant colour for her, when she sat to him, and if his portrait of her be a true one, she did not belie her reputation, though for perfect beauty her lips would appear to be rather too thin and her face, as a whole, rather too suggestive of cruelty and hardness. Horace Walpole, who was seemingly greatly fascinated by her, bought the sketch for £5, and, later, an imperfect impression of it, priced originally at sixpence, was sold to the Duke of Roxburghe for £8 5s., whilst a copy of her alleged confession fetched twenty pounds. Before her burial her body was exhibited at an undertaker's on Snow Hill, and, to see it, thousands of people willingly paid a small fee.

One person, believed by many to be her employer, Mr. Kerrol, was unable to control his emotion, and

on seeing the body, he bent down and kissed it. Nor did her notoriety end with her burial, for some time after she was laid to rest, or rather to supposed rest, in St. Sepulchre's Churchyard, her skeleton was, in my opinion, very wrongly, disinterred and transferred to the Botanic Garden, Cambridge, where, in all probability, it is still to be seen.

This in itself would be sufficient to cause hauntings, and certain of the periodical outbursts of hauntings in the Temple, supposed by some to be associated with this young and beautiful murderess, might well be attributed to it.

In 1573 Peter Burchet, a half-crazy fanatic of the Middle Temple, while undergoing imprisonment in the Tower of London, for heretical opinions—he was first arrested for seriously wounding Sir John Hawkins of naval fame in mistake for Sir Christopher Hatton—murdered one of his keepers. For this crime he was hanged in the Strand, close to the spot where he had wounded Sir John Hawkins. This, also, is a tragedy that might well account for some one or other of the Temple's alleged periodical hauntings.

And yet another possible cause of hauntings may lie in the fact that, in 1685, John Ayliff, a barrister of the Inner Temple, was hanged for high treason, opposite the Temple Gate. So much for the Temple.

If any churchyard in London ought to be haunted, it is that of Greyfriars, for here, side by side, lie the remains of people who met with violent deaths and certain infamous wretches who richly deserved hanging, but who escaped punishment through their titles and influence. The list of those interred here include Isabella, the cruel, beautiful wife of Edward II; John

Hastings, Earl of Pembroke, who was accidentally killed in a tournament at Woodstock Park, Christmas, 1389; Mortimer, Queen Isabella's paramour, who was hanged at Tyburn, for usurping too much power and for participation in the murder of Edward II (a murder which was, undoubtedly, planned and arranged by the Queen), and whose body, before being interred, had hung in chains for at least two days; Sir Robert Tresilian, Chief Justice of England, and Sir Nicholas Brembre, Lord Mayor of London, both temporary favourites of Richard II, and as great villains as it was possible to find in London. They were hanged at Tyburn, and everyone said they richly deserved their fate; but if all the wealthy Londoners who merit the same fate to-day were hanged, what a scarcity of gallows there would be! The list is not ended. Here, too, in this gloomy, out-of-the-way cemetery lie the severed remains of that Mortimer (Sir John), who, for no other crime than that he was believed to be a menace to the throne, on account of his genealogy, was hung, drawn and quartered at Tyburn by his enemies in 1423; whilst nearby lies all that is left of Thomas Burdet, who, for finding fault with Edward IV for wantonly killing a white buck, was barbarously tortured and executed; and all that is left of pretty Alice Hungerford, who tiring of her husband, murdered him, and had the bad luck to be found out, tried and executed. She was hanged at Tyburn in 1523.

Out of such a bunch small wonder is it that the churchyard has the reputation for being, at times, very badly haunted. Despite the alleged fact that naughty Isabella was buried with the heart of her husband laid, at her request, on her breast, her spirit

could not find rest.[1] Periodically, according to report, it still hovers about the churchyard, a figure in white, with lean and haggard features and eyes glowing with diabolical hate. At least such was the description of it given me in the summer of 1898, by one who claimed intimate association with the Greyfriars and old Christ's Hospital. He told me that Greyfriars burial ground has also been haunted by strange noises and lights, supposed to owe their origin to Sir Robert Tresilian having dabbled in the Black Art. Tradition affirms that Sir Robert always carried about with him, on his person, certain images used in ceremonial witchcraft and sorcery, which were believed to act as a charm, and that these, together with a tiny bust of the devil, were found on him and removed before he was taken to be hanged at Tyburn. After his burial tradition declares the spot where he was interred was the scene of, for a while, all kinds of gruesome and alarming phenomena, and periodically, so my informant assured me, the phenomena occur now, as do hauntings by the ghost of Alice Hungerford.

In one of the cloisters of the old Christ's Hospital, adjoining the burial ground, is [2] an impression in the stone, not unlike a human foot. This is traditionally said to have been caused by the ghost of an erstwhile beadle's wife, stamping with tremendous force and energy, when addressed by some living human being in a disrespectful fashion.

This allusion to schools and their adjacent buildings reminds me that a ghost is said to haunt the head-

[1] See *Old and New London*, by Walter Thornbury, vol. ii. page 365.

[2] This refers to the time when the old Christ's Hospital was a school. Whether the stone remains now that the school has gone I have been unable to ascertain.

quarters of the Brothers of the old Charterhouse. Up and down the main staircase in this ancient edifice wanders, with noiseless tread, the headless phantom of a man in the dress of a bygone period. It is believed by some to be the ghost of the ill-fated Duke of Norfolk who, in 1565, bought the Charterhouse, and resided in it till 1569, when he was committed to the Tower for implication in the conspiracy to place Mary, Queen of Scots, on the throne. After his release in 1570 he was again committed to the Tower for further acts of high treason, and eventually executed in 1572, when his estates, including the Charterhouse, were confiscated by the Crown.

It was after his death that the Charterhouse, more particularly the main staircase, was declared to be haunted by his apparition, which, they say, still appears there, although very occasionally.

From the old Charterhouse to St. Bartholomew's in Smithfield is no great distance, and both have at least one feature in common, namely, the reputation of being ghost-ridden. As regards St. Bartholomew's it is not, perhaps, to be wondered at, considering the terrible scenes that were enacted under its very shadow in the days of the religious persecutions of the sixteenth century.

The spot generally used for the burnings is believed to have been exactly opposite the main entrance to the church, the victim being tied to the stake in such a manner that his face looked to the east, and to the great church door, on the threshold of which stood the prior of St. Bartholomew.

When excavating on this site for a new sewer in 1849, the workmen laid bare a number of unhewn

stones, blackened with fire, ashes, charred human bones and strong oak posts, likewise charred, to one of which was fastened a staple and ring.

No reasonable person could doubt the significance of these discoveries; they prove, more emphatically than any document or words, the hideous cruelties that were enacted in England during those hectic days, when no one's life was safe if he held any views at all upon the subject of religion.

When I was visiting the church, some years ago, I was informed by someone who was then associated with St. Bartholomew's that ghostly groans and voices were not infrequently heard at night, close to the spot where the excavations had taken place. I was also told that people have, from time to time, complained of being followed by ghostly, shuffling footsteps in one of the ambulatories of the church.

According to my informant, about forty or fifty years previously the tomb of a certain prior or knight was broken into by thieves and his bones, with various articles found in the tomb, were scattered about the church. They were all speedily put back, with the exception of a shin bone and leather bridle; the bridle was eventually recovered, but whether the shin bone was as well, my informant could not say. Anyhow, the disturbance of these remains was supposed by some to be the cause of the ghostly, shuffling footsteps.

My same informant stated that there was a tradition to the effect that years ago a lady had seen a ghostly shape suddenly emerge from a doorway and come towards her. It was so horrible that she swooned, and never recovered from the shock. One of the

clergy belonging to the church is also said to have seen it about the same time.

I asked my informant whether he himself had ever seen or heard anything ghostly in the church, and he said yes, but it was only on my promising most seriously that I would not disclose his identity that I eventually persuaded him to tell me his experiences.

He was, he said, in the church alone, one winter morning at an early hour, the church consequently being dark, when, suddenly, through the gloom loomed a figure, approaching him from one of the ambulatories. As it drew near he perceived it was a woman in a white dress, and on her drawing nearer still to him, he recognized his daughter, whom he knew to be then abroad. As he looked at her in awe and wonder, she gradually grew fainter and fainter, until, finally, she vanished altogether.

He subsequently learned that at the time he had seen what he believed to be her phantom she was seriously ill in her far-away home. I am not quite sure whether he said she eventually recovered, but I am under the impression that he did, in which case I presume that what he saw was her projection or immaterial ego.

She had been a very constant attendant at the church when she had lived with her parents in London, hence very possibly she had been thinking intently of being in the church and had thus, quite unconsciously perhaps, projected herself (her spirit self) there ; the conditions for projection happening at that moment to be right.

He also told me he, too, had occasionally heard in

the same ambulatory ghostly footsteps that followed him about, without, however, frightening him.

For my own part, I must say that as I wandered about the church in the waning daylight, I certainly thought I saw a figure, seemingly coming from nowhere, suddenly cross the aisle in front of me, and vanish. Whence it came and whither it went I do not know. It was gone very quickly without making the slightest sound, and it left me, if not actually unnerved, so shaken that I moved rather hurriedly towards the nearest door, and made my exit.

The following is a story I have told before, but it will, I think, bear repeating. It relates to old Newgate; when I say old Newgate, I mean the Newgate that was demolished some thirty or so years ago and was generally termed old. As a matter of fact, it was of no great antiquity, having been built in 1770, from plans by the younger Dance. In 1780 it was partly destroyed during the Gordon Riots, but rebuilt two years later, since when, up to the time of its demolition, portions of it periodically underwent renovating and reconstructing.

The last night of its existence, that is to say the night prior to the commencement of its demolition, only two people slept in it, an official and his wife. I interviewed them both, some years ago, in Brixton, and they told me of the strange experience they had during their last night in old Newgate.

"We were sitting in the kitchen," the official began, "having just had our supper, when suddenly we heard the bell from the condemned cell ringing. The bell was in the corridor, and could only be rung by someone within the cell pulling the lever, and as we

knew we were alone in the building we were not a little surprised and startled. However, armed with a lamp, off we went to fathom the mystery, or at least to see if we could do so. As we went the bell kept on ringing, and on our entering the corridor out of which the condemned cell led, we could see the bell swinging violently to and fro. As we drew close to the cell, it stopped, and all was quite still. We opened the cell door. No one was there, nor anything that could in any way account for the ringing, and we have often asked ourselves the question, who or what caused it? That is the only ghostly experience we had in Newgate during the many years we were there."

CHAPTER VII

HYDE PARK

If we agree that tragedy is the principal cause of hauntings, instead of being surprised, we should expect to find Hyde Park badly haunted, for few, if any, of the public places in London have witnessed so many sad and terrible deaths.

Perhaps one of the most extraordinary stories of a queer happening in Hyde Park was that told me one evening, some years ago, by a Mr. Montero, at the International Club for Psychical Research, in Regent Street. This is what he said: "I am a native of the Argentine, and have been in England rather more than three years. One evening, during my first summer here, I wandered into the Park by the Marble Arch entrance, and turned down the path running parallel with the Bayswater Road. When I was about half-way between the Marble Arch and Lancaster Gate, I crossed the road on to the grass and took a seat under an elm tree, with wide-spreading branches, occupying rather an isolated position, that is to say with no other tree or seat very near it. After I had been sitting there for ten minutes or so, a tall, elderly man, who looked like a fellow-countryman, came up to me and said, 'If I were you, sir, I would not sit under that tree.' I asked him why, and he told me the following story, which he prefaced with an allusion to my comment on his nationality.

"'You are right,' he said, 'I come from the Argentine; my name is Hervada, and my home is in Buenos Aires. I am in England on business. A few nights ago I paid my first visit to the Park and sat just where you are sitting. There were a good many people about, principally couples obviously courting, but a heavy downpour of rain cleared them all off and I found myself, so far as I could see, quite alone.' Here he paused, glanced apprehensively around in a manner that impressed me as being very odd, and then went on. 'The storm did not last long, and soon after it had ceased I fell asleep and dreamed. I fancied I had gone home and was visiting my son-in-law, and with him watching my grandchildren at play in the nursery. Suddenly, with the abruptness that is so characteristic of dreams, I was back again sitting just where you are. A brilliant moon and myriads of scintillating stars enabled me to see all around me, as clearly as if it had been day. I thought I was feeling for my matchbox, to light a cigar, when two hideous, brown, bare and knotted arms suddenly clutched me round the waist and a strange hoarse voice said, "José Montero, your time has come. You will remain here and join the others, there is a place reserved for you in the rear, as you will soon see." The voice had barely said this, when a procession of shadowy figures seemed to rise from the grass and advance towards me, through the moonlight. They were of both sexes and, judging from their dress, they represented many periods in history.

"'Every variety of costume was included in this procession: stomachers, farthingales, ruffles, wide-brimmed cavalier hats with long drooping feathers, full-bottomed wigs, apple-blossom sacques, cherry-

coloured petticoats of quilted satin, high-heeled shoes, perukes, three-cornered hats and knee breeches, and even cloth caps and bowlers. On the shadowy figures came, walking two abreast, slowly, and with an absolutely silent tread, their faces a ghastly white in the moonbeams, and full of the most abject terror. When the last two were on a line with my chair, the voice from the tree bade me fall in.

" ' For mercy's sake, let me go,' I pleaded ; and I prayed a million times more earnestly than I ever prayed before.

" ' " If you promise to return at this hour a year hence, I will let you go," the voice said, and without a moment's hesitation, I promised. With that everything faded away and my mind became a complete blank. When next I was cognizant of anything, I found myself still sitting in my seat, with one of the Park keepers in front of me, asking for a penny.' Here the narrator of the story paused again, then, after glancing apprehensively around, as before, he went on : ' I made inquiries about the tree, and several of the out-at-elbows who frequent the Park at night told me that nothing would persuade any of them to go near it because of its evil reputation. They (those to whom I spoke) had never seen anything themselves, they said, but they knew those who had, and knew for a fact that more than one person had been found lying dead under its branches. " We all call it," they added, " ' the devil tree.' "

" ' You will doubtless laugh at me, but I am convinced that this seeming dream was no dream, that I am in the power of something satanical, having pledged myself to it.' "

" I told him not to worry, that I was sure it was only a nightmare, but he adhered to his conviction that the tree was haunted by an evil spirit, and that he was doomed to die on the date the voice had specified. Before we separated he gave me his card, and asked me to dine with him one evening at the Trocadero. I did so, and we met several times again before he finally left for South America. One evening, some months after his departure, I visited Hyde Park again, entering by the Marble Arch and wandering, as on the previous occasion, down the side path in the direction of Lancaster Gate. When I was about half-way to Lancaster Gate a man crossed the path in front of me from the direction of the Bayswater Road and looked me straight in the face. It was still quite light, and, to my astonishment, I recognized Mr. Hervada. Without saying a word he crossed the road on to the grass. Yielding to an impulse I followed him. He made straight for the ' devil tree,' turned round, looked intently at me with an awful expression of terror in his eyes, and suddenly vanished. On my return home I looked in my memorandum book and found it was the anniversary of my first encounter with Mr. Hervada, the night the voice in his dream, if dream it really was, had specified. Some weeks later, a friend in common, a man that Mr. José Hervada and I both knew slightly, handed me a newspaper cutting. It was from an American paper, and it referred to the death of Mr. José Hervada. Glancing nervously through it, I discovered that Mr. Hervada's death had occurred suddenly in his own home, on the night I saw him vanish in the Park, under the ' devil tree.' "

Before the Great War, when the police regulations were not enforced as strictly as they are now, I used to spend whole nights in the Park, fraternizing with the flotsam and jetsam of humanity that knew no other home than the Park, and no other shelter from the rain and snow, and from them I heard innumerable accounts of weird happenings, seemingly inexplicable, save on the basis of what, at present, we believe to be the superphysical. Many of these stories centred round a certain tree, for instance, the following, told me one summer evening by a down-and-out, whom I sat beside on one of the benches skirting the path that runs parallel with the Bayswater Road.

"I was strolling across the grass, close to here, one night," said my informant, who had once been in the Church, at least so he said; and possibly it is true, because the Church, like every other vocation, has its black sheep and ne'er-do-wells, "when I suddenly became conscious of someone in front of me, and upon raising my head—I had been walking with head bent in deep thought—I saw a woman a few yards ahead of me. She was going along in the same direction as I was, and the moonlight was so strong on her that I could see every item of her dress. It was a shabby 'turnout,' a grey worsted shawl, a rusty black skirt, very bedraggled and frayed, an old battered bonnet, and a pair of boots, with splits in the backs of them, through which I could see her bare skin. She looked so poor and solitary that a wave of pity went through me, and I hastened my steps to give her the wherewithal for a night's lodging. Fast as I walked, however, the distance between us invariably remained the same, although she never seemed to make any altera-

tion in her pace. We continued in this fashion, she moving along automatically, her head bent, and her bare heels glistening in the moonbeams, and I pounding away, straining every muscle in my legs to catch her up, until we came to a spot where several paths met.

"I then perceived, some little distance off, to my right, a huge, solitary tree with very curiously-shaped branches, one of which, in particular, riveted my attention. It stretched out from the trunk, at a height of six or seven feet from the ground, like a great arm, and it terminated in what looked exactly like fingers, long bony fingers, slightly curved, as if about to clutch hold of one. The woman ahead of me now turned sharply and made straight towards it. She was entirely in the open, the ground on either side of her being quite bare, and, as I gazed, I perceived a certain indistinctness, a something shadowy about her that I had not noticed before. Again I hastened my steps, in an attempt to overtake her, and again the distance between us remained the same; but the moment she came under the shadow of the tree she turned round. As she did so, one soft brilliant ray of light fell on her face, and made every feature in it stand out with frightful clearness. I say frightful clearness, because the thing that looked at me was not living, it was dead —long, long dead. I got 'the wind up' so badly that I ran out of the Park into the Bayswater Road, and spent the rest of the night wandering about the streets. Anywhere was preferable to the Park, with its gloom, and silence, and grim sepulchral trees. By the following evening, however, I had pulled myself sufficiently together to come here again. I looked everywhere,

going over the same ground, for the tree, but could not find it. At last, after making fruitless inquiries of several men who had been here for years, I asked a very old man, who I was told must know every inch of the Park, if he could direct me to the tree I wanted to find, and he, at least, was able to throw some light on the matter. He took me to a broad open space, which I seemed to recognize, and pointing to a certain spot, said, ' That's where the tree you are looking for stood, about twenty years ago. I remember it very well, it had a branch exactly like a human arm and hand, and it fascinated people, fascinated them so much that they used to like to sleep under it, and quite a number who tried to do so were found dead in the morning. One or two, I believe, hanged themselves on its branches. It was cut down eventually, partly, I understood, because of these suicides, and partly because it was said that queer things had been seen and heard in its vicinity at night.'

" That is what the old fellow told me, and I believe it was true." It was thus the down-and-out ended his story. With regard to suicides in the Park, however, I think the spot most favoured by them is the Serpentine. Among those who drowned themselves there in the past was Harriet Westbrook Shelley, the unhappy wife of the poet Shelley. This sad event took place in 1816, and rumour has it that her ghost, as well as numerous other ghosts, haunts the Serpentine at night. I cannot find any authentic accounts of hauntings of this particular locality in the Park, but several stories of such hauntings have been told me, amongst others, the following.

Two ladies, taking a walk in the Park, paused on

the banks of the Serpentine and stood looking around. It was a none too pleasant autumn afternoon, as the wind was blowing from the east, and there were, consequently, few people about. Suddenly one of the ladies, looking at the water just in front of them, exclaimed, "I wonder what is causing those ripples?"

"A fish, of course," the other lady replied; "there are fish here, no doubt, though one doesn't hear of anyone catching them."

However, she had barely finished speaking, when a hand appeared above the surface of the water. It was a white, slim hand, evidently a woman's, and the long fingers were clutching the air convulsively, like those of a drowning person. On one of them, the middle finger, was a plain gold ring, that flashed and sparkled in the waning daylight. The two ladies stared at it in horror, too shocked to stir or utter a sound. After, possibly, a minute, it slowly sank out of sight, a few ripples marking the spot where it had disappeared.

"Whatever was it?" the one lady ejaculated, looking at her friend with a blanched face.

"God alone knows," her friend replied, shivering, "but let us get away from here as fast as possible."

And they almost ran out of the Park. I heard this story in a London Club.

In my chapter dealing with hauntings in St. James's Park, I purposely omitted allusion to Rosamond's Pond, now non-existent, since it was originally connected with Hyde Park by a small stream, the pond being actually constructed, I believe, as a receptacle for the waters of this stream. There seems to be some doubt as to its exact date, but it probably existed as far

back as the sixteenth or seventeenth century. St. James's Park itself, as I have already stated, was originally a marshy field belonging to the Hospital for Lepers, which Henry VIII seized and converted into a residence for himself, this residence forming the foundation of what is now known as St. James's Palace. Rosamond's Pond was situated, I believe, in the south-west corner of St. James's Park, in the vicinity of Birdcage Walk, and, according to all accounts of it, there were few, if any, more picturesque and, at the same time, melancholy-looking pieces of water in the whole of London. Tall trees, with fantastically-fashioned branches, lined, at intervals, its irregular shores, which were covered in places with weeds and a variety of other dank and dismal vegetation. In its palmiest days it was a favourite trysting spot for ladies and gallants, who used to meet there at night and pledge eternal love to one another in the pale moonlight.

> "*This the blest lover shall for Venus' sake,*
> *And send up vows from Rosamond's Lake.*"

So Pope wrote of it in his *Rape of the Lock*. After it was forsaken by "the upper ten," who deserted it directly it became frequented by the non-fashionable element, it gradually passed into disrepute, until in its latter stages it was chiefly visited by footpads and bad characters of all kinds.

It had a fatal fascination for broken hearts, more particularly those of the feminine sex, and witnessed more suicides of the "unfortunate" class than any other spot in London. Small wonder is it, therefore, that long after its "filling up," which took

place in 1770, its site was reputed to be very badly haunted.

To revert to Hyde Park. Some of the ghostly happenings said to take place in Hyde Park would seem to owe their origin to fatal duels. What was known as the Ring was the favourite spot for the more fashionable duels, but the less fashionable folk settled their disputes in various other places.

The Ring, which occupied high ground about 150 yards to the north of the east end of the Serpentine, was an open circular area, anchored by rails, round which, at intervals, stood very ancient trees of various species. A few of these trees are said to be still standing. As late as 1835 the Ring was traceable, though it had long since ceased to be the rendezvous for duellists and fashionable society. One of the most sanguinary encounters at the Ring was between Lord Mohun and the Duke of Hamilton, their seconds, Major Macartney and Colonel Hamilton, also fighting. Both the Duke and Lord Mohun perished on the spot.

According to some accounts of the tragedy, Lord Mohun deliberately stabbed the Duke to death, after the latter had been seriously wounded and was helpless; according to other accounts, it was Major Macartney who stabbed the Duke; while according to yet other accounts, it was a servant of Lord Mohun who committed the cruel and dastardly deed. However, be that as it may, Major Macartney was subsequently tried for the murder of the Duke and found guilty of manslaughter only. The Duke appears to have borne a pretty good reputation; at all events there were people, Dean Swift among them, who seem to have mourned his death; but Mohun is generally

described as a thorough profligate and blackguard, feared by many and beloved by none. His widow's only regret, when his corpse was brought to the house, was that the blood from it dripped on the carpet and stained the bed-clothes.

Another fatal high-life duel in the Park was between Lieut.-Colonel Thomas and Colonel Gordon. It was fought in 1780, and resulted in the death of the former.

Seventeen years later, Colonel Fitzgerald was killed by Colonel King in pretty well the same spot. Very possibly some of their ghosts still haunt the scene of the tragedies. One of the rag-and-tatters brigade who used to frequent the Park in pre-war days, and who seemed too uneducated to have made himself acquainted with its long past history, told me that, when sleeping under the trees, he had, on several occasions, heard the clash of steel, just as if two men were fighting one another with swords.

" There was awful groaning, too," he said, " but it sounded rather 'ollow and far away."

The opinion of the writer is that what this tramp heard were the sounds made by the ghostly re-enactions of certain of the duels once fought, with fatal results, in the more remote parts of the Park. The Park has witnessed many cold-blooded murders, too, stabbings, and shootings, and deeds of violence of every sort, the majority of which, perhaps, are mysteries that have never been solved.

One such occurred in 1857; it created considerable interest. Some people were approaching the Serpentine one day with a Newfoundland dog, when the latter suddenly dashed on ahead and plunging in the

water swam towards a dark object, some little distance away, which it seized and brought to shore. It was the dead body of a child, and a glance was sufficient to reveal the fact that it had met with foul play. The murderer was never brought to book, and, as a consequence of rumoured ghostly happenings on the banks of the Serpentine, subsequent to the discovery of the body, the spot was deserted after dusk for some weeks. That certain localities tempt people to commit homicidal acts is never more proven than in the case of Hyde Park and St. James's Park.

If the deeds were confined to the immediate vicinity of the water in these parks, one might think it was the fascination still water has for people of certain temperaments, but homicidal deeds have been very common in parts of the Park where there is no water. I am of the opinion that the key to the mystery lies in a combination of the Unknown, in superphysical forces that are attracted by still water and by certain trees, and which, in their turn, attract and influence people of certain temperaments. It is not merely the appearance of the still water glimmering in the golden sunshine or cold moonbeams that inspires a person with a sudden impulse to drown themselves or someone else, it is a power, a force lurking near the water that, magnet-like, attracts some people to its shore and there fills them with homicidal thoughts. The same applies to trees. In certain parts of countries where the natives are brought very much in touch with nature in its more primitive state, there still prevails belief in trees haunted by what in Greece are termed Stichios, or spirits for which certain trees have a peculiar fascination. It is not always trees belonging

to a peculiar species that are stichmonious, because, for example, some banyan trees are haunted and others are not; it is trees possessing a certain personality, a mysterious something, at present undiagnosable, that attracts and magnetizes denizens of the other world or worlds.

I have already quoted several instances of the power such trees possess over some people, and here is one more. Again my authority is one of the fraternity of the road, and this being so, I would remark that tramps are not imaginative as a rule, and that it is not at all likely that a tramp would take the trouble to make up a story without any object.

To proceed, I was told by this tramp that a woman they called "All Button Mary," because she had so many buttons on her jacket, slept under an elm one evening, and in the morning said she intended drowning herself, as a voice from the tree had kept on whispering to her all night, telling her what a fine place the other world was, and that she must get there as quickly as possible. She did drown herself, because, later on in the day, she was found in the Serpentine.

"If that was the only case one might say it was insanity," the tramp remarked, "but it ain't. Two women, contrary to my advice, slept under the tree one night, and before morning they were fighting one another so viciously that one was badly hurt."

The elm, when stichmonious, would usually seem to be haunted by a grotesque type of spirit that affects people of certain temperaments in a very unpleasant way. If it does not tempt them to suicide or murder, it generates in them vicious desires and strange manias.

Women appear to come under its influence more than men.

The oak, of which there are many in the Park and there were still more in bygone days, has always been regarded as very closely associated with the Unknown. It was the Druids' favourite tree, and witches often held their Sabbats under its gnarled and knotted branches. Very possibly some of the oaks and elms that surrounded the Ring in the Park were stichmonious, and this might well account for the dastardly deeds that in so many cases accompanied the duels that were fought in their vicinity. I can find no mention either of beeches or birches near the Ring; though both species of trees are or were to be found in other parts of the Park. The stichmonious beech influence, which is stronger over women of certain temperaments than over men, is very far-reaching, and when it is stichmonious the beech resembles the octopus, not only in appearance, but in other respects too. It gets a wide and firm grip over its victims, which is not easy to shake off.

Within a few yards of a house I know in the North of England there is a huge beech tree; and the first time I approached it I was conscious of a curious influence exuding from it. I felt at once that it was stichmonious, and that the spirit haunting it was of the type beech trees so often attract. I am now certain of it, having known the house close to which the tree stands for some years. One tenant of the house was a foreign lady who developed an art, possibly hitherto latent in her, of acquiring husbands with money, getting most of it from them, and then contriving a divorce.

One of her husbands died very suddenly. I was chatting with him at eleven o'clock a.m. on the day he died, and he then appeared to be quite fit and well. Some hours later, he was dead, either shot or poisoned; and the verdict was suicide. Within a very few months another husband (her fourth) appeared upon the scene, and as soon as she grew tired of him, which she did very quickly, she gave him the alternative of a good lathering with a horse-whip or a few chops with a keen-edged hatchet. Preferring neither, he barricaded himself in his bedroom, till she had somewhat quietened down, and then fled from the house, thankful to escape with a whole skin.

She appeared to be quite impartial in her dealings with the sexes; for when she was not making unmistakable advances to some moneyed or strikingly handsome man, her attentions were turned to some subtly attractive member of her own sex. And this lady's passion thus impartially bestowed was all due, I believe, to that beautiful, wide-spreading, stichmonious beech tree, which stood in her garden, almost within hand-reach of her bedroom window.

After she left the house, it was taken by a titled lady, who soon showed that, with regard to the male sex, she had the same striking tendencies as her predecessor. After one husband had gone rather abruptly "west," she secured a second, by inveigling him into an affair, which led to his wife getting an almost immediate divorce. This second husband, a wealthy cotton spinner, was very much older than Lady ——, and he died most opportunely, she, at the time, having just met a man to whom she had taken a violent fancy. This man is now her husband, and, if the saying I once

heard, when I was working on a ranch in the wilds of America, namely, " Sleep an hour under shadow of an old beech tree, and parted from your husband soon you'll be," be true, it is extremely fortunate for him that they have vacated the house overshadowed by the stichmonious beech tree and are now living, I believe, in a spot that is absolutely free from any such malign influence.

The silver birch, in my experience, possesses, when apparently stichmonious, a strong attraction for both sexes ; it inspires in them the most ardent passion not only for those of the opposite sex, but for itself. In a previous chapter, I have referred to a member of the old International Club for Psychical Research who fell madly in love with a silver birch tree in the Green Park. Supposing it to have been stichmonious, the nymph haunting it must have possessed a fairy beauty that had the power to charm humans almost to distraction. I myself have felt the fascination of such trees in Hyde Park and other places, though I have never gone to the extremity of serenading them or of composing love sonnets for their edification.

I conclude this chapter with a tree story narrated to me in Hyde Park one evening many years ago.

It concerns Black Sally, a tramp, of partly gipsy origin and of rather more than middle age. Her usual beat was the West of England, between Bristol and Penzance, but occasionally she extended it and came to London. She was tall and slim, the rude members of the fraternity called her scraggy, and that she had once been handsome was self-evident, as she still showed signs of more than ordinary good looks. She owed her nickname of " Black Sally " to the fact

that her face was never clean, to be more precise, to the fact that it was always dirty. It was her boast that she had not washed it for ten years, not, indeed, since the eventful night when she and her husband parted. He turned her out of doors, having found someone he liked better; and thus it was that she became a wanderer on the broad highway, with all interest in life gone, and with it all desire to wash and be cleanly. She had a constant dread that one day she and her husband would meet again, and that he would murder her. She often used to harrow the feelings of tramps in the Park, at night, with her fear and apprehension of what he would do to her.

Like many others of the fraternity, she had a real love for trees; they were, she said, her best and truest friends, and there was one tree in particular in Hyde Park that seemed to attract her more than any of the others. It was an old elm, a tree that everyone else avoided and would never sleep under, as they believed it was haunted by something very evil. Knowing its reputation, Black Sally, it seems, resisted her desire to sleep under it for some time; but so great, apparently, was her fascination that one night she succumbed to her desire, with the result that in the early hours of the morning she was found lying at the foot of her beloved tree, cold, stiff and dead.

At that period such finds were by no means uncommon, they invoked little excitement or comment among the officials of the Park and the general public, and the finding of Black Sally's body proved no exception to the rule. There being no visible marks of violence on her body, it was said by those in authority that death was due to natural causes. Some

of the tramp fraternity, however, were of a different opinion. They had seen a dark, sinister-looking man, a complete stranger to them, loitering in the neighbourhood of the elm with the evil reputation, and remembering Black Sally's horror of her husband, with regard to her death they could not help coming to a conclusion of their own.

The tramp who told me this story assured me that for several nights after this tragedy had taken place, sighings and moanings were heard coming from the spot where Black Sally's body had been found, and that at night a footprint swimming in what looked like blood was always to be seen there, the blood vanishing suddenly and mysteriously with the coming of the sun. My informant took me to the tree, styled he said by him and his mates of the road "Black Sally's tree," and pointed to the ground under it. The night being light, a great silvery moon overhead, I was able to discern with considerable distinctness a mark, certainly not unlike the imprint of a human foot, a long narrow human foot, but it was dry. I commented on this, and my informant remarked, "The blood has not been there lately, only just the footprint, but those who knew Sally declare it to be hers."

As we moved away from the tree, I heard a sort of shuddering groan coming from it. I swung round; no one was there, only Black Sally's tree, its slightly nodding branches darkly outlined on the moonlit soil.

CHAPTER VIII

BLACKFRIARS AND HIGHBURY

Most people know, perhaps, that within the last century there have been several epidemics of murder in this country (in the thirties, forties and sixties, for example, there was an epidemic of poisoning by women, who, as a rule, chose their husbands for their victims), but probably not everyone knows that periodically London has experienced epidemics of haunting.

As we have seen, there was something approaching one in the parks about the beginning of last century, and there was another, covering a much wider area, in 1871 and 1872. Regarding the latter epidemic, it began thus.

There were two or three houses in Stamford Street, at the corner of Hatfield Street, that had stood empty for more than forty years. Twenty-five years previously they were owned by an eccentric old solicitor named Read, who was reputed to be very rich. He lived in a house close to them, and owing to his never trying to let them and allowing no one to enter them, save his wife and daughter, many people supposed that there must be a mystery of some sort connected with them. Some thought that the mystery was a crime committed in one of them, whilst others thought that Mr. Read had hidden some of his money in them, and these beliefs grew when, upon Mr. Read's death,

it was rumoured that he had left instructions in his will that his widow should continue to keep the houses tenantless. Anyway, Mrs. Read did keep the houses tenantless, and, at her death, her only child, a daughter named Angela, followed suit. It was during Miss Angela Read's ownership of the houses that reports of their being haunted first got into circulation.[1]

People passing by them at night saw lights moving about in them, and occasionally white faces pressed against the window panes. Sceptics were of the opinion that the forlorn and desolate appearance of the houses, which were overrun with rats, may, in the first place, have suggested the idea that they were haunted, this idea gaining colour when lights were seen moving about inside them; albeit, according to these same sceptics, the lights were merely lanterns carried by Miss Read and her old servant, who, in accordance with the will of old Mr. Read, visited the houses every night, and possibly, whilst doing so, tried to find the treasure the eccentric old man was supposed to have secreted.

This, of course, may have been true. Other people, however, maintained that the lights and faces seen at the windows were superphysical, and that it was owing to these hauntings that the houses had so long stood empty. So great a notoriety did the houses acquire, that the street was crowded every night with people eager to see the alleged ghosts.

When Miss Read died she bequeathed the houses to the Consumption Hospital at Brompton, and in 1874 they were demolished. Before this event took place, however, rumour spread that certain empty

[1] See *Penny Illustrated Paper*, Dec. 1871; and *Old and New London*, vol. vi.

houses in Blackfriars, Snowhill, Newington and other parts of London also harboured ghosts.

With regard to one of these houses in Blackfriars, I heard a strange story from Mrs. M., who, in 1898, was staying in Upper Norwood. Her story was as follows :

" In the summer of 1870 my husband and I, being on the lookout for a cheap house, as our funds, at the time, were very low, went to an Estate Agent in the S.E. district. He had a large number of ' empties ' on his list, but one close to the Blackfriars Road struck us as absurdly cheap, considering its accommodation. It was a twelve-roomed house, not including the basement, which the Agent told us consisted of a large kitchen and other domestic offices. The street where it stood had at one time been fairly fashionable, but of late years, like many other streets, it had deteriorated and become little better than a slum.

" ' If you can put up with the people,' the Agent said, ' you might, perhaps, stick the house, but remember I have warned you.'

" My husband shrugged his shoulders—they were very broad ones.

" ' Beggars can't always be choosers,' he remarked, ' and if the house is in anything like repair, we must put up with our neighbours. I presume they won't actually molest us ? '

" ' I don't think they will knock you on the head, if that is what you mean,' the Agent laughed. ' Still, some of them look pretty tough customers. However, you might as well take the keys and have a look.'

" Being extremely busy just then he could not spare

anyone to show us over the house, so we decided to go there alone.

"The Agent did not exaggerate when he said the street was little better than a slum. It swarmed with dirty children, playing all manner of games on the pavements, and women in bedraggled dresses, who stood on doorsteps, shouting at one another over dilapidated palings. The house of which we had the key was a corner house. Its exterior, blackened with the smoke and dirt of ages, presented a sombre, forbidding appearance, which was rendered still more unprepossessing by its general state of decay. Grass flourished in the interstices of the high, steep steps, which were broken and unsafe to tread on; the rusty iron palings surrounding the house had become loosened in their stone settings, and several of the windows on the ground floor and in the basement were cracked and broken.

"When we opened the front door, long since devoid of paint, a gaunt-looking cat, with lantern-like eyes, scurried past us into the street, and hideous cockroaches, with long sprawling legs, either darted hither and thither on the grimy hall floor, or stood still, as if transfixed with astonishment or terror, waving their long antennae. We were, furthermore, greeted with that damp, musty smell, peculiar to houses that have been long shut up.

"Once, no doubt, the house had been inhabited by well-to-do, if not actually rich, people, and marks of former splendour remained in the oak panelling of the hall and staircase. Cobwebs, however, festooned the walls and finely-moulded ceilings, whilst over all hung a sense of oppressiveness and utter desolation.

"'We can never live here,' I remarked to my husband, as we viewed, one after another, the large, bare reception rooms, oak-panelled throughout and furnished with the large Dutch tiled fireplaces that came over with the tulips in the days of William and Mary. 'I should be terrified at being here alone.'

"'We should have to let out some of the rooms,' my husband replied. 'I rather like the place, it is so quaint and old-world.'

"He had not, however, then seen the basement. It was the largest and gloomiest basement I have ever been in. A large, stone-flagged, cheerless kitchen, with a large and even more cheerless scullery beyond, both dank, and dark, and horribly suggestive of all kinds of horrors.

"We got out of it as quickly as possible, and were thinking of leaving the house, without viewing the upper part of it, when we heard what sounded like the plaintive notes of a spinet proceeding from one of the rooms. Impelled by curiosity, we ascended the stairs in the direction of the sounds, which, apparently, came from a room on the second floor. However, upon reaching the second floor landing, we heard a door on the landing above us open. The music then abruptly ceased, there were sounds of a struggle, a piercing scream, a heavy thud, and a noise like someone being choked to death. We were too taken aback at first to do anything but stare at one another in speechless horror.

"My husband, who was first to recover," Mrs. M. went on, "ran towards the stairs and was about to go up, when a woman came running down. She was tall and thin, and very pale; she had red hair and a

hatchet-shaped face, and was wearing a quaintly-fashioned black dress, with a white kerchief folded round her shoulders and across her bosom, and the kind of mob cap that was in vogue among servants about eighty or a hundred years ago. In one hand she held a piece of cord. There was something so strangely sinister and startling about her that my husband shrank aside to let her pass. Upon reaching the head of the stairs, leading to the ground floor, she paused, and turning round and leering horribly, shook her bony hand menacingly at us. Then she ran swiftly down the stairs.

"Directly she disappeared," my informant added, "my husband seemed to recover the use of his limbs, and was about to tear after her, when a loud chuckling laugh prevented him. We both stood still to listen, but after that there was absolute silence. Though we were both horribly frightened, we forced ourselves to go upstairs, fully expecting to find evidences of some dreadful tragedy, but there was nothing. We went into every room, but they were all absolutely empty. No sign anywhere of a spinet or body. Just bare, dusty, oak floors and panelling.

"Convinced now that what we had heard and seen was something supernatural, we hastily left the premises, and returning to the Agent, informed him of what had occurred. He listened to us with great interest and, on our pressing him, admitted that it was not the first time people who had visited or stayed in the house had complained to him of similar happenings.

"'There is a tradition in the neighbourhood,' he said, 'that a murder was committed in it many years ago,

but whether the tradition is in accordance with fact or not, there is, undoubtedly, something queer about the place, and, in strict confidence, you are well out of it.' "

The haunting thus described by Mrs. M. reminds me of one in an old square in Highbury. By referring to my notebook I find that it was told me in the summer of 1900 by a septuagenarian artist named Stock.

The house that figures in his story has long since been pulled down. It bore the ill-omened number 13, and for years had in its tiny front garden a large board with " To be Sold or Let " in large lettering on it. Mr. Stock took it, furnished, about the year 1849, employing as his housekeeper a Mrs. Brown, who had been strongly recommended by the landlord. She undertook to " run " the establishment for him, with the aid of a charwoman to do the very rough work. Mr. Stock did not work in the house; he shared a studio, not far away, with a brother-artist.

I have called the place in which the house was situated a square, because that is what the authorities who name streets in London styled it. In reality, it was just a narrow oblong enclosure, where a score or so of melancholy trees cast their shadows on a wilderness of tall grass and rank weeds, and all the houses around it seemed to have acquired an air of chronic damp and gloom.

It was not a cheerful spot. The sun rarely seemed to discover it, and at the date I am referring to, almost every other house in it was empty. It had one great attraction for Mr. Stock, however: it was a cheap locality, and the rent he paid was small, ridiculously small.

The first night of his stay in the house he arrived about ten o'clock, and being tired after a long day's work, he asked Mrs. Brown, who was well acquainted with the geography of the place, to show him to his room at once. She went upstairs with him. It was rather a winding staircase, and his room was on the second floor. On the way to it he had to pass a window, a little above the first landing, just where the stairs took a sharp curve.

Curious to see on what the window looked, he tried to peer out of it, but the inky darkness without merely revealed the reflection of his own face and, oddly enough, the reflection of two other faces. One was that of Mrs. Brown, and the second face, close beside hers, seemed to be that of a very repulsive-looking man, at least that was Mr. Stock's first impression; but he concluded afterwards there must have been some curious flaw in the glass, and that both reflections were those of Mrs. Brown, who was certainly far from good-looking, though not actually hideous.

He found his room quite comfortable, and being very tired he slept right through the night, without waking, till it was time to get up.

The following day found him again at work in his studio, but he left off early, and after dining at the restaurant he usually patronized in Soho, he went home, and got there in time, so he told himself, to do a little reading before turning into bed.

Retiring to his room, he ensconced himself in front of the fire with a bundle of magazines. He had not calculated on the effects of the fire, however, which made him so drowsy that before very long he was fast asleep. He awoke, with a start, to find that the fire

had burned very low, and that the room, in consequence, was in almost total darkness. Indeed, he feared at first that there was not sufficient vitality in the embers to light a candle, and that he would be unable, having no matches, to see how to undress and get into bed. A few skilful touches with the poker, however, soon dispelled this idea and produced a bright, cheerful flame.

He rose from his stooping posture, intending to get a spill or paper lighter from the mantelshelf, for the purpose of lighting his candle. As he did so, his glance fell on his own face in the mirror in front of him, and what he saw reflected in it caused him to stare in astonishment.

Standing at the farther end of the room, facing the door, was an elderly woman, a woman he had never seen before. That she had not been in the room a few minutes previously he could swear, for he had looked all round the room, and, in spite of the dimness of the light, seen well enough that he was alone and that the door was closed. It was closed now, but how could she have opened and closed it without his hearing, unless she had done so during the brief moment he had spent poking the fire, which seemed to him an utter impossibility?

What was very odd, too, was that she did not trouble either to speak to him or even to glance in his direction. She simply stood still, her face turned towards the door, as if listening. That she was someone belonging to the house seemed evident too, since she was wearing a kind of négligé gown of white cambric, with deep frills down the front and at the wrists. Who could she be, he wondered? Some friend of Mrs.

Brown, who had mistaken the room? Just at that moment the fire shot up into a brilliant flame, throwing a lurid light on her face and making it most startlingly clear.

Never in his life had Mr. Stock seen such a face before, and never, he told me, would he wish to see one like it again. The woman, as I have said, was elderly; she might have been sixty or she might have been more, for her hair was grizzled and her general appearance suggested feebleness. Her face, too, was lined, but it was her expression that riveted Mr. Stock's attention and appalled him. It was an expression of hopeless, utter despair and ghastly, speechless horror, blended together and concentrated in the effort of listening, and so intense was this effort of listening that it appeared to absorb every nerve and fibre in her body. She was listening to something outside the room, away on the landing or stairs, to something which from her starting eyeballs and the quivering muscles of her lower jaw, seemed to be drawing nearer and nearer. Then, suddenly, the door began to open, slowly, very slowly, and, as it did so, the woman shrank back, nearer and nearer to the wall, the horror in her face growing more and more fixed.

Suddenly the fire flame died down and the room was plunged in darkness. A few moments later, and another spurt of flame revealed to Mr. Stock that the woman was gone. The room was once again empty and the door closed. Yet there had been no sound, not even the lightest footfall. The house was wrapped in unbroken silence.

The following morning Mr. Stock tackled Mrs. Brown on the subject, and asked her who the elderly

lady was who had paid him a visit the evening before.

"You've been dreaming, sir," Mrs. Brown responded, "there wasn't anyone in the house but you and me."

"Did you leave the hall door open by mistake?" Mr. Stock suggested gently.

"Leave the 'all door open?" Mrs. Brown said, with great indignation. "Why, I'd never think of doing such a thing. The hidea of it! It was shut and locked directly it grew dark."

"An elderly woman in a loose kind of dress of white cambric was in my room at about ten o'clock last night," Mr. Stock persisted.

"Then all I can say," Mrs. Brown responded, "is that you must 'ave let 'er in yourself, or been dreaming. It was a dream, I expect; gentlemen as studies art or as works in studios often 'as queer dreams. You can 'ear 'em mumbling to themselves at night."

"It was no dream," Mr. Stock said stolidly. And there the matter for the time ended.

About a fortnight after this conversation Mr. Stock came home late one night from the theatre. There was no light in the hall or upon the stairs, except from the candle he carried. After putting that ready for him on a chair, Mrs. Brown had turned out the gas. Mr. Stock went upstairs on tiptoe. When he came to the curve and the window to which I have already referred, the latter, as on the first night he spent in the house, attracted his attention, and gazing at it, he saw himself reflected in it at full length, but, to his amazement, he also perceived reflected in it the head and shoulders of a man, who, apparently, was coming

up the stairs behind him. Turning sharply round, Mr. Stock then saw creeping slowly, with stealthy, noiseless footsteps, up the stairs a hunchbacked man in his shirt sleeves. The man, being below him on the staircase, with his head slightly bent, at first Mr. Stock could see only a mass of coarse, shaggy red hair, not quite long enough to conceal a pair of large, crinkly, misshapen ears; but as the hunchback came on round the curve into full view, his face became clearly discernible. Indeed, some strange light other than the flickering candle flame seemed focussed on it. It was the same dreadfully repulsive face Mr. Stock had seen reflected in the window on the night of his arrival. A low, retreating forehead; misshapen nose, that looked as if it had been broken in a fight; loose, sensual lips; brutal, wolfish jaws; light eyes, illuminated with an expression of deadly, sinister determination. It was the face of some terrible beast of prey rather than that of a human being. In one hairy hand he held an ordinary table-knife, the blade of which, worn to a point like a dagger, had evidently been recently sharpened; and stair by stair, with a snake-like crawling movement, he drew nearer to Mr. Stock, who, spellbound, shrank back close to the staircase wall. The man, however, did not appear to notice him, but passing him by crawled silently up the stairs towards his bedroom. Compelled by some power inside himself, which he could not resist, Mr. Stock mechanically followed the crawling figure. When the latter arrived at Mr. Stock's door, he paused for a few moments and looked at the knife with a grin of hideous exultation. Then, gripping the handle of the door with his coarse, bony fingers, he slowly turned it.

The room within was full of moonlight, which poured in a broad stream through the open window, and right in its path stood the same woman Mr. Stock had seen before, the elderly woman in the loose morning gown of white cambric.

The cause of that look of awful fear in her protruding eyes was now only too apparent, it was the hunchback, whose face shone with evil joy as he beheld her terror. What the end of the drama was, one can only surmise, for just as the hunchback entered the room and advanced with devilish slowness on his shrieking victim, a gust of wind blew the door to with a loud bang; and upon Mr. Stock throwing it open (the banging of it had broken the spell that had hitherto bound him), instead of seeing something terrible, as he fully expected he would see, he found the room just as usual, with no sign anywhere either of the woman in the cambric dress or of the dreadful hunchback. However, not daring to remain in it, he spent the night in the drawing-room, with the gas fully turned on.

A few days later he vacated the house, thus choosing, despite the desperate state of his exchequer, to sacrifice a year's rent, rather than remain in it. But what was the explanation of the mystery?

What was the dark secret of the house so strangely shadowed forth to him, a really quite matter-of-fact young man, who had never, before entering the house, seen a ghost or believed such a thing existed? Mrs. Brown either would not or could not give him any information. She persisted he had been dreaming, and that there was nothing wrong with the house. She had never seen or heard anything, and she had lived in it for several years as caretaker.

The mystery has never been fully explained; the secret, perhaps in a more materially real sense than is at present apparent, remaining hidden in the dreary walls of the place, until they were eventually pulled down. All that Mr. Stock could discover, after minute inquiries among neighbours and shopkeepers in the vicinity, was that no one of late years, excepting Mrs. Brown, had ever stayed long in the house; but that years ago, before the present landlord bought it, the house had been occupied by an old woman and her son, a very ill-favoured hunchback, who were supposed to have gone away somewhat hastily. At any rate no one saw them go, but a year or so afterwards the son returned alone, saying his mother had died abroad.

He remained in the house some months and then disappeared. No one knew whither he went, and no one cared. It was after that that the house was so often to let and was never occupied for any length of time, till Mrs. Brown came there as a caretaker. For some odd reason the strange happenings in the house did not seem to affect her. She stayed on till the end of Mr. Stock's year. The house was then sold again, with the same result: no one would live in it.

CHAPTER IX

HOLLAND HOUSE, LONDON BRIDGES AND CHICK LANE

HOLLAND HOUSE, originally the manor house of Abbots, Kensington, was built in 1607 for Sir Walter Cope, and possesses at least one ghost, that is to say if there is any truth in rumour and tradition. The ghost, which is thought to be that of the first Lord Holland, usually emerges, at the stroke of midnight, from behind a secret door in the "gilt room," and gliding noiselessly through that apartment visits other parts of the building.

It inspires all who see it with the greatest terror, owing to the fact that it is headless. Its body terminates in a mere protuberance of neck; it carries its grinning head under one arm.

Henry Rich, the first Earl of Holland, inherited the house on the death of his father-in-law, the aforesaid Sir Walter Cope. A certain unluckiness would seem to have been associated with the gilt room, for the Earl had it decorated with great splendour for a ball, to be given on the occasion of Prince Charles's marriage with Henrietta Maria of France, and although the marriage came off, the ball did not, which so greatly disappointed the Earl, that it is thought by some to account for the haunting; a theory that is rather strengthened by the fact that the ghost of the Earl, according to the tradition, is to be seen most often in the gilt room, the room round which his

disappointment centred and in which, during his lifetime, he took such a very pardonable pride.

The headless condition of the ghost may be explained by the fact that Lord Holland was executed in 1649 for his unsuccessful attempt to restore Charles I to the throne. Apart from this haunting, Holland House was formerly visited by at least one other ghost.

My authority is John Aubrey,[1] who narrates the following interesting incident in connection with Lady Diana Rich, daughter of the Earl of Holland.

"The beautiful Lady Diana Rich," he says, "daughter to the Earl of Holland, as she was walking in her father's garden at Kensington, to take the fresh air before dinner, about eleven o'clock, being then very well, met with her own apparition, habit and everything, as in a looking-glass. Almost a month later, she died of the smallpox, and it is said that her sister, the Lady Isabella Thynne, saw the likeness of herself also, before she died. This account I had from a person of honour."

Aubrey believed in certain houses possessing a something about them that entailed catastrophe and ill-luck on those who inhabited them.

"'Tis certain," he says, "that there are some houses unlucky to their inhabitants, which the revered and pious Dr. Napier could acknowledge."

"The Fleece Tavern, in Covent Garden (in York Street)," he continues, "was very unfortunate for homicides, there have been several killed there in my time. It is now (1692) a private house." In a footnote he informs us that one of the homicides was

[1] *Miscellanies*, by John Aubrey, F.R.S.

" Clifton, the master of the house, who hanged himself, having perjured himself." Still continuing, he says: " A handsome brick house on the south side of Clerkenwell Church-yard had been so unlucky for at least 40 years, that it was seldom tenanted; and at last nobody would venture to take it. Also a handsome house in Holborn, that looked towards the fields, the tenants of it did not prosper, several, about six. At the sign of —— over against Northumberland House, near Charing Cross, died the Lady Baynton (eldest daughter of Sir John Danvers of Dansey). Some years after, in the same house, died my Lady Hobbey (her sister) of the smallpox, and about 20 years after, died their nephew, Henry Danvers, Esq., of the smallpox, aged 21, wanting two weeks. He was nephew and heir to the Right Honourable Henry Danvers, Earl of Danby."

What Aubrey says about unlucky houses suggests what I have already said in this volume, that attached to certain places, trees, commons, pools and other spots is a sinister influence, which I am inclined to believe is superphysical, that prompts people to commit all kinds of crime and vicious acts.

I have referred especially to the Serpentine, the Ring, and Rosamond's Pond in connection with this hypothesis. I may now add to that list Waterloo Bridge, Westminster Bridge and the Monument. Dealing with the last-named first, some attribute the fascination the Monument possessed for suicides to its height—its altitude from the pavement is 202 feet—others to its quietude. For my own part, I am inclined to think that whereas both these peculiarities might prove an inducement to some would-be

suicides, there is, nevertheless, a something in addition at the Monument, something lurking in the atmosphere there, indefinable, undiagnosable, detectable only by certain very susceptible temperaments, that suggests throwing oneself over. I have felt it on Clifton Suspension Bridge, which has witnessed many suicides since its erection about sixty-five years ago; on the St. Vincent Rocks near by, and late at night, when few have been about, on several of the London bridges. The epidemic at the Monument began with William Green, a weaver, in 1750. That financial trouble had nothing to do with his leap to death was suggested by the finding of eighteen guineas in the pocket of his coat after the fatal plunge. Some years later, the body of Thomas Craddock, a baker, was found at the base of the Monument.

It was stated officially that in leaning over the rails to look at an eagle in a cage, he had overbalanced and fallen into the street beneath, but there were many who queried this. In 1810 Lyon Levi, a diamond merchant, took the fatal leap. It was suggested in the papers that financial losses were responsible for the deed, but, if he had premeditated suicide, why that weary ascent to the summit of the Monument? Why not poison or the river?

In 1839 Margaret Meyer, daughter of a bed-ridden baker of Hemming's Row, St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, threw herself over. The next year a boy named Hawes followed suit; and two years later Jane Cooper, a servant girl from Hoxton, destroyed herself in like manner. Those who were present on this occasion witnessed something very terrible and extraordinary. Jane, when the watchman's back was turned, scrambled

on to the iron railing on the top of the Monument, and tucking her clothes about her, took a headlong dive. She struck, with great force, a griffin on the base of the Monument and, rebounding, shot over a cart, that was passing at the moment, into the road beyond.

After this the City authorities caged in the top of the Monument, and there have been no suicides from it since.

Waterloo Bridge and Westminster Bridge, in past years, have figured almost equally at coroners' inquests. The total number of tragedies that have taken place on them will never be known. Those that are known make up a sum that is truly appalling. Murders, so far as statistics show, have been much less frequent on these bridges than suicides.

The most sensational occurrence on Waterloo Bridge was undoubtedly what the contemporary Press styled the Great Thames Mystery of 1857.[1] The story has been so often told that it is needless here to say more than that, for years after the said tragedy, all kinds of rumours regarding ghostly happenings on the bridge were in circulation.

Of Westminster Bridge a strange tale has been told in reference to the Jack the Ripper crimes. It was said they terminated with the suicide of a man who was seen to leap from Westminster Bridge on the stroke of midnight, December 31, 1888. This man, so it was asserted, was a member of the medical profession, who had been suspected for some time by the police. When he realized the net was closing round him and arrest would probably take place very shortly, he took the fatal leap. Whether there is any truth in this story I cannot say, but I do know that

[1] *Great Thames Mysteries*, by the author of this work.

when I was lodging in York Road, Lambeth, about ten years later, I met several people, during my nocturnal rambles, who assured me Westminster Bridge was haunted by the ghost of a man who was, periodically, seen jumping from it, as Big Ben sounded midnight.

A strange tale of a ghost on Blackfriars Bridge was told me about this time by a postman who, like myself, was lodging in York Road. He said that when crossing the bridge, very early one autumn morning, he only noticed two people on it. One was a policeman some little distance off, and the other, only a few yards away from him, a tall woman, apparently in mourning, as she was dressed all in black. Suddenly the woman commenced climbing on to the wall of the bridge. Feeling sure she was about to commit suicide, the postman ran towards her, to try and prevent her, but was too late, for she had disappeared. However, off came his coat, and he was about to jump into the river, to try to save her, when the policeman, who, as he must have seen what had just taken place, appeared to be somewhat callous, stopped him.

"Put on your coat again," he said, catching him by the arm. "It is of no use your jumping in. What you saw was no living person, it was a ghost. If you had been on the bridge at this hour yesterday morning, you would have seen the same thing, and, in all probability, it will happen again to-morrow."

The postman, who was very disbelieving regarding the superphysical, thought the policeman was trying to deceive him, and told him so.

"Well, you come here to-morrow morning and see for yourself," was the reply.

The postman said he would, and he was as good as his word. The same hour, the following morning, found him again on the bridge, and the very same thing occurred. A tall woman, all in black (she was the very same woman, he could swear, whom he had seen commit suicide on the previous night), ran to the side of the bridge, as he approached, and climbing on to the parapet, disappeared.

"Well," the same policeman, who was standing by, observed, "didn't I tell you so? I've seen her do the same thing, at the same hour, for seven consecutive mornings. I'm told it won't happen again (it's what they call periodical haunting) for a good many years, and I'm truly thankful for that, as it's a bit trying to one's nerves."

The postman agreed, and went on his way thoughtfully.

Whilst I am still dealing with ghosts in the neighbourhood of the City, reference must be made to an authentic case of haunting that occurred in St. Swithin's Lane in the fifties of the last century. It was at Number 15, a very old house, then inhabited by a family named Simpson.[1] Nothing unusual seems to have happened till after the family had been in the house for some time. Then, one day, two of the children, a girl and a boy, while on the top landing, saw a very short, elderly lady come from the direction of the staircase and enter one of the bedrooms. Wondering who she could be, they followed her immediately, but she had disappeared. There was no one in the room. Soon afterwards, the girl, on

[1] The case was sent to the Society for Psychical Research, and was recorded in their organ about forty-five years ago.

coming out of the drawing-room, saw the same old lady standing at the foot of the staircase, and a few minutes later she saw her for the third time walking across the landing on the second floor. There does not appear to have been anything very alarming about the ghost, for neither of the children was at all frightened. They were merely curious, as the old lady was a complete stranger to them, and they marvelled at her presence and the manner in which she kept disappearing and reappearing in different parts of the house.

On another occasion, when the children were playing in the nursery, the old lady suddenly appeared in the doorway, smiling at them. It being light, they were able to note details in her appearance. She was wearing a shabby black dress, and rather a large bonnet, with a good deal of velvet on it. When she moved away, they all followed her to one of the bedrooms, where they suddenly lost sight of her. They asked the servants who she was, and the servants, who had probably been told what to say, informed them it was a lady who had come to see their mother.

One night Mrs. Simpson was sitting in one of the rooms alone, waiting for her husband. Hearing a noise outside on the landing, she went to ascertain the cause, and saw, to her surprise and, we suppose, fear, although she does not say so, a man's face peering down at her from over the balustrade of the staircase. Summoning the servants she caused a thorough search of the house to be made at once, but without finding any trace of the man. Either again that night, or some nights later, she saw the same man on the staircase. As he was shrouded in gloom she could

not see his face distinctly, but merely received the impression it was very white. He disappeared inexplicably, while she was looking at him.

Mr. Simpson was the next to see "something." He was in his office one morning—his office was on the ground floor of the house—when he suddenly saw, standing in front of him, the little old lady he had heard so much about. He recognized her from the description given him by the children. She was very pale, and had a gentle expression. She wore a dark bonnet with strings tied under her chin, and had her hands clasped together in front of her. After regarding him earnestly for some time, she moved away with a curious gliding motion and abruptly disappeared.

These would appear to be the only occasions on which the family actually saw any phenomena in the house, but they often heard strange, unaccountable noises. Occasionally there would be sounds of very mournful singing in a recess of one of the bedrooms, while on other occasions they heard moaning and sighing in the dark, cavernous cellars under the house. No satisfactory explanation of the disturbances was ever forthcoming.

The house was eventually pulled down, but whether on account of the haunting I cannot say. The case, which, as I have said, is strictly authentic, affords an excellent example of a not infrequent kind of haunting, where ghosts appear without any apparent specific purpose. It is quite a mistake to suppose that only houses that have witnessed tragedies are haunted, for I know thoroughly well-attested cases of ghostly happenings in houses that have never witnessed any violent death, the phantasms seen being those of

people known to have passed away quite peacefully. It may have been so in the case of the old lady seen at No. 15 St. Swithin's Lane; and although the sighing and moaning certainly suggest trouble of some kind, that trouble may have had nothing to do with the female phantom, for the simple reason that hauntings are often complex, the same house harbouring phenomena that are, apparently, quite independent of one another. St. Swithin's Lane is very old; and besides, close to it is Watling Street, which is the oldest thoroughfare in London, being part of the Roman Road leading from Dover to London and thence on to South Wales. It is more than likely, therefore, that many tragedies have taken place in this locality in ages past, and the ghostly sounds heard at No. 15 St. Swithin's Lane may have originated in one or other of these tragedies that were enacted probably on, or close to, the site of the house, and they may or may not have been connected with the phantasms, respectively, of the old lady and the man on the stairs. Also, there may well have been some ghastly crime committed in those cavernous cellars in the house in St. Swithin's Lane, which time has failed to bring to light, and which will henceforth, now that the building has been demolished, remain in obscurity for ever.

A ghost that created a very widespread sensation at the time is associated with Chick Lane, afterwards known as West Street.

Chick Lane came into great notoriety in or about the year 1758 through the murder of Anne Naylor, an apprentice of Mrs. Sarah Metyard, a milliner in Bruton Street, Hanover Square. Mrs. Metyard, assisted by her daughter, Sarah Morgan Metyard, a

very pretty, delicate-looking girl, and five young apprentices, had a flourishing business, her clientèle being ladies living in the locality.

Anne Naylor, being of a sickly constitution, was not able to do so much as the other girls, and she, therefore, incurred the animosity of Mrs. Metyard and her daughter. Not content with scolding and half-starving her, they constantly beat and pinched her. Indeed, so cruelly did they treat her that, in despair, she one day ran out of the house, and would have succeeded in getting away had not a milkman, be it to his eternal discredit, stopped her and handed her over to Sarah Morgan, who was pursuing her, and who, having thus captured her, dragged her back to the shop, and subsequently locked her in a garret. There she was kept for several weeks, her daily food consisting, merely, of a small piece of dry bread and a glass of water.

Seeing an opportunity she again tried to run away, but was caught in the act by her young mistress, who took hold of her by the neck, dragged her, screaming, upstairs and flung her into the same garret. The old woman, now, announcing that she must be taught a lesson, threw her on to the bed and held her down, while Sarah Morgan, after pinching and pummelling her all over, beat her unmercifully with a hearth brush. This done, they put her in a back room, and fixing a cord round her waist, they tied her hands behind her, and fastened her to the handle of the door, so as to prevent her sitting or lying down ; and in order that her fellow-apprentices might be intimidated, they were ordered to work in the adjoining apartment, with strict injunctions not to afford Anne any relief.

Thus tied up, and without food of any kind, the unfortunate Anne Naylor remained for two or three days and nights. She was then liberated and told to go to bed in the garret. So great was her exhaustion that she could only just crawl to it.

The following day she was too feeble to speak, and Sarah Morgan, after pinching, kicking and slapping her, tied her again to the door. In this position she eventually died.

The other apprentices noticing that she did not move told Sarah Morgan, who said, " If she does not move soon, I'll make her." She then took off one of her shoes, and with its high heel beat Anne Naylor ferociously on the head. This treatment failing, as also did vindictive pinches and slaps, she grew alarmed and called her mother. Mrs. Metyard, realizing that Anne was dead, freed her body from the cords that were supporting it, and telling her daughter to assist her, they carried the corpse between them to the garret. They then pretended that Anne had had a fit, but had recovered and was locked in the garret, lest she should run away.

To give colour to this story, they made a great show of taking a tray with a plate of meat on it to the garret, for Anne's dinner.

As, however, they could not keep up this subterfuge indefinitely, they put Anne's body in a box, and leaving the door of the garret and the street door open, they told the other apprentices Anne had run away.

Anne's sister, who was one of the apprentices, seeing Anne's shoes and her various articles of clothing in the garret, became suspicious and informed a lodger in the house that she believed Anne was dead.

Whether the lodger told the Metyards what the girl said is not clear, but, at any rate, they got to know of it somehow, and seizing Anne's hapless sister, when the other apprentices were not present, they dragged her to some remote part of the house, and barbarously murdered her. How, is not known for certain, nor was it ever definitely ascertained what they did with the body. Anne's body they kept in the house till the stench became unbearable; then they cut it up. "The fire tells no tales," Mrs. Metyard exclaimed, as she threw one of Anne's hands into the flames. She had intended getting rid of the whole of the body in the same fashion, but the hand made such an unpleasant odour burning, that she decided to resort to some other device for the disposal of the rest of the remains. Finally, she and her daughter conveyed them to Chick Lane, a locality notorious as a haunt for bad characters of all kinds, where it was their intention to throw them into the gulley-hole, a kind of common sewer there, but being, for some reason, unable to accomplish this, they very foolishly left them in the mud and water that had collected, forming a shallow pool before the sewer gate.

Here they were found at midnight by the watchman, who told the night constable, who, in his turn, informed one of the Overseers of the Parish. The last named at once had the remains collected and taken to the watch-house, where they were examined by Mr. Umfreville, coroner for the district. He considered they were merely parts of a corpse taken from some churchyard, for the purpose of anatomy, and declined to summon a jury. And there, for the time being, the affair ended.

It was only by pure accident the truth concerning the remains ever came to light. For some time after the finding of them in Chick Lane, reports that the place was haunted by a white-robed figure got in circulation. People passing through the lane at night declared they saw a figure in white gliding mysteriously to and fro, near the gulley-hole, and the ill-reputation of the spot, consequently, increased very considerably.

The house in Bruton Street, where the murders had taken place, also got the reputation for being haunted, a similar figure being seen there.

Two years after the murders, and while these uncanny happenings were said to be taking place, a Mr. Rooker came to lodge with the Metyards, and had frequent opportunities for observing how badly Mrs. Metyard now treated Sarah Morgan. Had the latter been an unattractive girl, probably he would not have interfered, but as she was quite remarkably pretty, he persuaded her to accompany him, nominally as his servant, to a house he took in Hill Street. Mrs. Metyard, who was furious at Sarah Morgan leaving her, went to Mr. Rooker's house daily, and was so abusive both to him and her daughter that, hoping to be rid of her, Mr. Rooker moved to a little estate, bequeathed to him by a relative, at Ealing. Sarah Morgan accompanied him again, no longer, however, even nominally his servant, but his mistress, in which capacity there is little doubt she had been for some time. Dressed in very smart clothes, with a profusion of jewellery, Sarah Morgan, probably, had few equals, as regards appearance, either in Ealing or London, and all might have gone well, for some time at least, had it not been for her mother. This woman, who

appears to have been remarkably well preserved and active, despite her years—she is generally described as old[1]—finding out where Sarah Morgan was living, went to Ealing and behaved in the same outrageous fashion as she had done in Hill Street.

On the 9th of June, 1768, being admitted into the house, she beat Sarah Morgan in a terrible manner, and during the struggle that ensued, many expressions were uttered by both women that caused Mr. Rooker great uneasiness. Mrs. Metyard called him "an old perfumed tea-dog," whereupon Sarah Morgan retorted by saying, "Remember, mother, you are the perfumer; you are the Chick Lane Ghost."

This reference to a haunting which many connected with the discovery of the unidentified remains near the gulley-hole, aroused Mr. Rooker's suspicions, and after Mrs. Metyard had gone, he asked Sarah Morgan to explain what she meant.

She hesitated, and it was not until he continually pressed her that she eventually burst into tears and confessed her participation in the murders of the two apprentices, begging him never to divulge a secret that so materially affected both her mother and herself. Mr. Rooker, imagining that Sarah Morgan had only performed her share in the crimes under compulsion and by the direction of her mother, and that, in consequence, she was not amenable to the law, acquainted the Overseers of the Parish of Tottenham with what Sarah Morgan had told him. As a result, Mrs. Metyard was arrested, and the evidence against her being conclusive, she was finally committed for trial. Some circumstances, however, coming out that helped to

[1] *Chronicles of Crime.* Edited by Camden Pelham. Illustrated by "Phiz."

incriminate Sarah Morgan as well, she also was arrested and with her mother conveyed to Newgate, to await her final trial.

When arraigned upon the indictment of wilful murder preferred against them at the Old Bailey Sessions, the two Metyards bitterly upbraided one another with the part each had taken in the murder, and if any evidence of their guilt had been lacking, what they said on this occasion would have been enough to secure their conviction.

They were found guilty and sentenced to be hanged. Sarah Morgan Metyard at once pleaded pregnancy, but a jury of matrons pronouncing this to be false, her execution was not deferred.

Mother and daughter were executed together at Tyburn on the 19th of July, 1768. Mrs. Metyard utterly collapsed on the way to Tyburn, and had to be carried from the cart to the scaffold. All efforts to restore her to consciousness failing, she was launched to eternity, while in a state of insensibility.

Sarah Morgan was in almost the same plight, but more sympathy was expressed for her, no doubt on account of her personal charm, which, as I have said, was very great. Many wondered how so fragile and absolutely lovely a girl could have behaved with such terrible cruelty to members of her own sex, mere children, too.

Both her body and that of Mrs. Metyard were afterwards dissected at Surgeons' Hall. Their execution, however, did not diminish, in any measure, the ill-reputation of Chick Lane, which still continued to be a place of dread after dusk, on account of the alleged ghostly happenings near the gulley-hole.

The house in Bruton Street, too, where the murders actually occurred, was for many years reputed to be haunted, and weird happenings are even now said to occur periodically in a certain building in this same thoroughfare, but whether or no it is the one formerly inhabited by the Metyards is not known for certain.

CHAPTER X

BIRD HAUNTINGS AND BLACKHEATH GHOSTS

More than one house in London has, at one time or another, been reported haunted by a phantom bird; but no bird ghost I have heard of combines such a blending of the material and immaterial, the real and the unreal, as that described by Mr. H. Spicer.[1] His story is as follows:

One night, during the early part of last century, Captain Morgan and a friend, arriving in London *en route* for the Continent, very late, looked for rooms and found some in a large eighteenth-century apartment house. In the centre of the Captain's room stood a huge four-poster bed, furnished with hangings of a sumptuous but somewhat heavy material. It suggested "the solid respectability and comfort" associated with one's ideas of the wealthy citizens of the time of Queen Anne and the first George.

The Captain, being tired, lost no time in getting into bed, and was speedily asleep. He was soon, however, awakened by a noise like the flapping of wings, and a sensation of extreme coldness. He sat up and saw, just in front of him, "an immense black bird, with outstretched wings, and red eyes flashing as if with fire." It made vicious pecks at him, which he had great difficulty in parrying. Snatching up a pillow he hit at it, but it always got out of his way,

[1] See *Strange Things Among Us*, by H. Spicer.

and he never once succeeded in touching it. After thus battling with it ineffectually for several minutes, he grew irritated, and jumping out of bed made a dash at it. The bird backed, still flapping and pecking, into one corner of the room, where it settled on the embroidered seat of a sofa. The moonlight shining full into the room enabled Captain Morgan to see it very distinctly, and it appeared to him to be very frightened. Thinking now that it could be easily caught, the Captain moved stealthily towards it, and then made a sudden grab at it. To his amazement, however, his fingers, instead of closing on anything material, merely clutched air. The bird had abruptly and inexplicably vanished.

He lit a lamp and searched everywhere for it, but not a trace of it could he discover. The next night, without making any allusion to what had happened, he asked his friend to change rooms with him, inventing some excuse for so doing. His friend good-naturedly complied, but came down to breakfast the following morning with a weary expression on his face. He said "he had had to contend for possession of the chamber with the most extraordinary and perplexing object he had ever encountered, to all appearance a huge blackbird, which constantly eluded his grasp, and ultimately disappeared, leaving no clue to its mode of exit." This mystery was never explained.

Mr. B., an eminent counsel known to Mr. Spicer, had a peculiar habit of suddenly twitching or tossing his head. Everyone commented on it, but few were aware of the reason. It was this: Every now and then, Mr. B. was conscious of a raven sitting on his left shoulder.

When I was giving a "talk" at St. Ives, some years

ago, a lady in the audience told of a somewhat similar instance in a West End shop.

A gentleman and lady were visiting the shop one day, when they saw, to their astonishment, one of the lady superintendents parading about with a speckled bird, belonging to a species they did not recognize, on her shoulder. Going up to her, the lady said, "Whatever kind of a bird is this on your shoulder?" whereupon the superintendent turned ghastly white and fainted.

It subsequently transpired that whenever a member of the superintendent's family was about to die, a strange-looking bird would be seen hovering near the doomed individual.

This instance proved no exception to the rule, for the superintendent, although in apparently perfect health at the time, developed ptomaine poisoning the next day, and died within a week.

A well-known case of bird haunting that excited much attention at the time occurred at the Church of West Drayton, near Uxbridge.[1] About 1749 a rumour got into circulation that the three large vaults under West Drayton Church were haunted. In one the family of Paget were interred, and in the other the even more ancient family of De Burgh. People passing by the church at night, more especially on a Friday night, declared that they heard knockings coming from the vaults. No very satisfactory explanation of them was ever given, but as, so it was said, the remains of a murderer, who had committed suicide, and the remains of his victim were buried together in one of the vaults, many believed that the knockings

[1] See *Glimpses in the Twilight*, by the Rev. F. G. Lee, D.D.

were thus accounted for; the supposition being, of course, that the spirits of the murderer and murdered could not agree, *i.e.* were unwilling that their bodies should lie side by side, and were demonstrating in consequence.

Others, however, had a different tale to tell. They said that one night some people living close to the church heard dreadful screams coming from it. Consequently, they hurried off to ascertain the cause, and finding, on their arrival at the church, that the screams proceeded from one of the vaults, they peered into it through the ventilation grating. They then saw, just inside the vault, an enormous raven that pecked at them furiously, and all the while it did so the screaming continued.

This story of the raven was confirmed by other people, including the wife of the Parish Clerk and her daughter, who testified to seeing it in the church itself.

One evening, a youth went to the local bell-ringers, who had emphatically denied that the bird was a phantom at all, and told them that it was flying about in the chancel; whereupon four of them, taking sticks and a lantern, ran to the church to try to catch it. On reaching the church they saw the bird, which was just as the youth described it, an enormous black bird, and it was fluttering about the chancel. They at once gave chase, and on one of the men striking it with a stick, it fell down screaming, apparently badly hurt. Believing that it was at last cornered, the man who had struck it was about to pick it up, when, to the amazement of them all, it was found that the bird had vanished.

After that it was often to be seen either perched on the communion rails of the sanctuary, or flying about in one or other of the vaults. Whenever, however, anyone attempted to catch it, it always mysteriously disappeared.

The villagers, especially those who, so to say, belonged to the place, firmly believed the tradition accounting for the bird, *i.e.* that it was "the restless and miserable spirit of a murderer who had committed suicide and who, through family influence, instead of being put into a pit or hole, with a stake through his body, at the cross-road by Harmondsworth, as was the sentence by law, had been buried in consecrated ground, on the north side of the churchyard."

Mrs. de Burgh, wife of Mr. R. L. de Burgh, a former Vicar of West Drayton, informed Dr. Lee, in 1883, that, some years previously, she had often heard sounds in Drayton Church like the fluttering of some very large bird, and that these strange sounds always appeared to come from the chancel; and, as late as 1869, two ladies, going into the church one Saturday afternoon, to put some flowers on the communion-table, saw a huge black bird sitting on one of the pews. The haunting would thus seem to be confirmed. Whether it still continues I am unable to ascertain.

Ealing, to my knowledge, possesses several houses reputed to be haunted, one, at least, by a thoroughly up-to-date ghost. In a house, not far from the Broadway, a lady who spent most of her evenings at London night clubs, dancing, recently died. The night after her funeral, sounds of syncopated music and dancing were heard proceeding from the room in which she breathed her last, and these sounds are

rumoured to have been heard there, periodically, ever since.

Ghostly music apparently does not affect all animals in the same way, for whereas this lady's cat—a large tabby—always runs upstairs directly the sounds commence and sits on the door-mat outside the room, apparently listening, with the greatest eagerness, to the music and dancing, a dog in the same house at once begins to bark and howl and manifest symptoms of terror and aversion.

Another house in Ealing is said to be haunted by a very beautiful hand, obviously that of a woman, for the fingers are long and tapering and the nails almond-shaped and highly manicured. It emerges from a wall in a certain room, but as its appearance is invariably the forerunner of a death in the family occupying the house, it is a very much dreaded phenomenon, and, consequently, very, very rarely mentioned.

In Ealing, as in many other suburbs of London, are the sites of several old cross-roads, where formerly suicides were buried and murderers hanged, and it is not at all unlikely that some of the present-day hauntings in Ealing houses may owe their origin to this fact.

One very well known case of haunted cross-roads near old Ealing village is narrated by Mr. Spicer.[1] According to him, not many years prior to his narration of the story, a very beautiful girl, daughter of a farmer, lived with her parents in the village of Ealing near London. She was engaged to a young man, also a farmer, but finding out something about him that convinced her he would not make her a good husband, she broke off her engagement to him, just before the

[1] See *Strange Things Among Us.*

date fixed for their marriage. Soon after this she disappeared, and, despite vigorous searching by the police and her friends, not a trace of her could be found.

Two or three years later, Mr. M——, who had known the missing girl, was returning home to Ealing one night from a party. When he came to the cross-roads, close to the village, he suddenly saw a girl walking in front of him. As she was distinctly attractive, being tall, slender, and prettily dressed, he determined to overtake her, which he did, and, I am bound to relate, shocking though it be, was about to put his arm round her waist, when she turned round and looked at him, reproachfully. He then saw, to his amazement, that she was the missing girl. Hardly, however, had he recognized her, before she abruptly and unaccountably vanished. Horrified beyond measure, he ran the rest of the way home and told his parents what had happened. The latter, feeling certain then that the girl had met with foul play, made a thorough search in the immediate vicinity of the cross-roads, and ultimately found her remains. She had, undoubtedly, been murdered. Suspicion attaching itself to the young farmer, he was eventually arrested and charged with the crime. What subsequently happened to him Mr. Spicer does not say. Possibly the haunting continued, as hauntings so often do, even after the murderer has been caught and duly punished ; and houses built on the site of those cross-roads may still be subjected, at times, to visitations by the phantoms of that pretty murdered girl and her cruel, worthless assassin.

Like Ealing, Blackheath can point to several houses

and places that are said to be haunted. With regard to the latter, Shooter's Hill had a reputation second to none, not only for ghosts, but for all manner of unsavoury happenings. For many years it was the happy hunting-ground of highwaymen, footpads and undesirables of all kinds, and therefore it has figured in the writings of various authors, notably in those of Pepys, Philipott, and, at a later date, Dickens.

"Shooter's Hill was so called," Philipott[1] informs us, "for the thieving there practised, where travellers in early times were so infested with depredations and bloody mischiefs, that order was taken in the sixth year of Richard II for the enlarging of the highway, according to the statute made in the time of King Edward I, so that they venture still to rob here by prescription." In spite of the efforts made in Richard II's time to improve the highway over the hill, and, according to Hasted, the making, at some distance from the old road, in 1733, of a new one "of easier ascent and of great width," the spot still continued to retain its evil character.

Pepys, writing of it in his *Diary*, tells us what it was like in his time. Under the date of 11th April, 1661, he says, describing his journey from Dartford to London, "Mrs. Annie and I rode under the man that hangs from Shooter's Hill, and a filthy sight it was to see how his flesh is shrunk on his bones." In those days, and for long afterwards, it was the custom to hang criminals on the gibbets that were to be seen at intervals on Shooter's Hill; and it was, alas, in those days, a rare thing to see a gibbet upon which no criminal was hanging.

[1] See *Survey of Kent* (published 1659).

According to Dickens,[1] even at the end of the eighteenth century, Shooter's Hill was still the occasional haunt of gentlemen of the road, and much dreaded by travellers on that account.

Later, after these pests ceased to frequent the highroads, Shooter's Hill and the adjoining locality became the scene of many a grim and mysterious tragedy, which affords still another example of the theory I have already propounded that certain localities have a something about them that may be physical or superphysical, or a blending of both, which attracts people of a peculiar temperament and impels them to commit acts of violence and crime.

In January, 1844, the skeleton of a woman was unearthed by a labourer thirty yards from the highroad leading to Shooter's Hill.[2] A terrible fracture on the back of the skull clearly indicated that the woman had met with foul play, and that she had not been dead very long was suggested by the fact that much beautifully-braided golden hair was still adhering to the skull. The beautifully-braided hair, however, proved no clue to her identity, and as, apparently, there was no clue to it, the remains were properly interred, and the mystery relating to her soon forgotten. Prior to the finding of the remains, it was said that people passing by the spot where they were found, at night, had heard unaccountable noises and occasionally had seen the phantom of a woman in a white dress, gliding about the ground. She was always spoken of as the White Lady, and when I was resident in St. John's Park, Blackheath, in 1898, I met

[1] See *A Tale of Two Cities*.
[2] *Annual Register*, 1844.

several people who remembered hearing about the appearances of this ghost.

One of these people was a Mr. Johnson, a man of independent means, then living or staying in Lewisham. When a boy, he told me, he remembered the following incident being frequently narrated by his father, usually when they had friends. To be brief, Mr. Johnson, Senior, on his way home one night, was descending Shooter's Hill, which at that time was still a very lonely and deserted locality after dusk, when he heard a cry, expressive of such awful terror and despair that he at once came to a halt. While he stood still listening, it was repeated, and it seemed to come from a spot close at hand. He called out, but there was no reply, only a death-like silence. Then, after an interval of a minute or so, the cry was repeated, and a woman, in a white dress, rose from the ground, some little way ahead of him. The moonlight being, so it seemed, focussed on her, he was able to see her very distinctly, and thinking she was ill and wanted assistance, he ran towards her. To his intense surprise, however, when he was within a few yards of her, she vanished. There was absolutely nothing in sight to afford cover, so that she could not possibly have hidden, and there was no hole in the ground into which she could have dropped. Mr. Johnson, greatly wondering, resumed his journey, but had not proceeded many paces when he heard the same cry again, this time very close to him. Although by no means a timid man, he was now thoroughly frightened, being convinced that what he had heard and seen was nothing earthly, and fearing that, if he delayed, he might see it again, he ran the rest of the way home.

Mr. Johnson had not heard of the haunting prior to his experience, and he was, of course, vastly interested when he learned that the phantom he had seen had been seen by others, and was popularly supposed to be the ghost of the girl with the golden hair, whose remains had been unearthed there only a short time previously. He never, his son added, passed the place again at night-time, alone.

About twenty-seven years later, the neighbourhood of Shooter's Hill once again came into very unpleasant notoriety. The district of Kidbrooke, which lies immediately between Blackheath and Shooter's Hill, was then far more thinly populated than it is now, and one of the loneliest thoroughfares in it was Kidbrooke Lane.

At twenty to seven p.m. on 25th April, 1871, a pretty servant-maid named Jane Maria Clousen said a laughing good-bye to a girl friend in Kidbrooke, and was never seen by her again, alive. Some hours later, she was found in Kidbrooke Lane, unconscious, having obviously been struck on the head with a hammer that was lying by her side. She died shortly afterwards, without regaining consciousness. The suspicion of the police falling at once on a young man named Pook, whose father had formerly employed Jane Clousen as servant, they arrested him.

A Mr. Lazell declared, on oath, that he saw Pook in Jane's company at ten to seven p.m. on the evening of the murder, close to the spot where she was afterwards found. Dr. Letherby, who examined Pook's clothes, testified to there being blood on his trousers, and the police produced evidence to show that Pook bought a hammer, shortly before the murder, at the

shop of a Mr. Thomas. All of which testimony seemed, to many minds, convincing; but as Pook was able to produce an alibi to show he could not have been in Kidbrooke Lane at the time the murder was believed to have taken place, he was acquitted; and no one else being arrested, the crime was consigned to the category of unsolved mysteries.

In certain respects it resembled that of 1844. In each case the victim was a girl; the skulls of both were battered in, and the spots, respectively, where the bodies were found were very lonely. They were not far apart, and each acquired the reputation for being haunted. As in the case of Shooter's Hill, Kidbrooke Lane, subsequent to the murder, was said to be haunted nightly by cries, and groans, and the apparition of the murdered girl. Such stories, indeed, got into circulation that the lane, for some long time, was shunned by nearly everyone after dark.

The crime was recalled in August, 1898, when Mrs. Tylor, a lone widow, was likewise battered to death in her house in Kidbrooke Park Road. As in the other two cases, no one was convicted of this crime, and consequently it remains a mystery.

These three murders, all taking place in the same neighbourhood and committed in very much the same manner, support my theory that in certain localities there may be an influence or power that impels certain people, more often the very young, to crime.

CHAPTER XI

SPRING-HEELED JACK AND THE BROMPTON ROAD

PERIODICALLY there crops up in various parts of the country a mysterious being known as Spring-heeled Jack. Sometimes this being has been proved to be a human, someone dressed up, either simply to frighten people by jumping over walls and hedges, a feat he was able to accomplish by the aid of very strong springs attached to the soles of his boots; or, else, to rob and injure as well as to frighten them; whilst, at other times, the identity and nature of the being have remained a profound mystery, many believing him to be superphysical.

Apparently, there is no authentic record of a Spring-heeled Jack prior to February, 1838, when a Spring-heeled Jack appeared in Bow and Old Ford, causing a great scare and frequent complaints to be made to the police and magistrates. Mr. Alsop, residing in Bearhind Lane, a lonely spot between Bow and Old Ford, and three of his daughters, made depositions,[1] with regard to him, before the Lambeth magistrates.

Miss Jane Alsop, one of the daughters, said that at a quarter to nine one night there was a violent ringing at the front door. On going to the door she saw a man in a long cloak standing on the threshold. He told her he was a policeman, and added: "For God's sake, bring me a light, for we have caught Spring-

[1] See *Annual Register*, February, 1838.

heeled Jack in the lane." Greatly excited, she ran and fetched a lighted candle and handed it to the man. The moment she did so, he threw aside the cloak that had concealed both his face and figure and fully revealed himself. What she saw petrified her. He was wearing a kind of helmet and tight-fitting white costume like an ulster. His face was hideous, his eyes resembled balls of fire, his hands had great claws, and he vomited blue and white flames. Without uttering a word he darted at her, and catching hold of her by the back of her neck he thrust her head under his arm. He then commenced tearing her dress with his claws, which seemed to her to be made of some metallic substance. She screamed and got away from him, but he ran after her, and catching hold of her again tore her neck, and arms, and hair. Fortunately, one of her sisters, hearing her screams, came running to her rescue. Her assailant then let go of her and bounded away into the darkness of the night. This story was confirmed by her rescuer, and also by Mr. Alsop. Miss Jane Alsop suffered severely from shock and from scratches on her arms and shoulders, which took a long time healing.

At Lambeth again, before the same magistrates, Mr. Scales, a highly respectable butcher of Narrow Street, Limehouse, and his sister, a girl of eighteen years of age, also made depositions. Miss Scales said that at half-past eight one evening she and her sister were returning home from a visit to their brother. While passing along Green Dragon Alley, a very lonely spot, they saw a tall figure, enveloped from head to foot in a dark cloak. He leaped towards Miss Scales, spurted blue flames from his mouth in her face, blinding her.

She fell to the ground in her terror, and there is no knowing what might have happened had not Mr. Scales, who was luckily near at hand, heard the screams of his sister, and ran to the rescue, whereupon the being in the cloak bounded away. Miss Scales was too overcome with shock to raise herself from the ground; she had to be helped up and assisted home, and for several days afterwards she was subject to violent fits. This story was corroborated by witness's brother and sister, who likewise made depositions on oath. They were able to give further details regarding the mysterious being's appearance. They stated that he was tall, thin and gentlemanly, and carried in front of him what appeared to be a small lamp or bull's eye.

The police took the matter up at once, but despite the vigorous efforts made by them to catch this Spring-heeled Jack, he invariably eluded them, and thus the mystery of his identity was never solved.

Seven years later there was a Spring-heeled Jack scare in Ealing and Hanwell. Women and children going along lonely roads at night were frightened almost out of their senses, upon seeing a figure, clad in a white gown and dark shawl, bounding over walls and hedges, and at the same time emitting dismal groans and shrieks. The local police were appealed to, with the result that this Spring-heeled Jack was soon caught. He was a Brentford butcher, named Richard Bradford, who had a mania for practical joking; however, as none of the people he had frightened appeared against him when he was brought before the Brentford magistrates, he was discharged, with a warning.

All through the fifties and sixties Spring-heeled Jack scares continued, at varying intervals and in various parts of the country, and sometimes they were proved to be due to some practical joker, as in the case of Richard Bradford ; but more often the identity of Jack remained a mystery, so complete that many were of the opinion he was either some evil spirit or the devil himself.

In the seventies there were innumerable scares, some in the more remote districts of London, and some in the provinces.

Probably the biggest scare was at Aldershot, where Jack used to take a special delight in terrifying night sentries by leaping across the ground in front of them, or springing on the sentry-box when they were inside it and slapping their faces with an icy hand. Sometimes he was fired at, but whether the sentries in their terror were too unsteady to take proper aim at him or not, their shots never seemed to affect him any way. The authorities professed to think Jack was some practical joker, and laid all sorts of traps to catch him, but in this they failed, and his identity was never proved.

In October and November of the same year either the same or another Spring-heeled Jack caused a panic in the neighbourhood of Newport in Lincolnshire. This time Jack appeared in something like a sheepskin, with a tail and prick-shaped ears. His feats were truly astonishing.[1] When pursued by a mob armed with sticks and stones, he leaped on to the roofs of cottages, ran over house-tops and jumped walls fifteen feet high. Always when on the point of being

[1] See *Illustrated Police News*, November 3, 1877.

cornered he disappeared, to appear again soon afterwards in another part of the neighbourhood. As he was jumping on to the Newport Arch, an ancient Roman building, supposed to have been erected during the first century A.D., he was shot at by a man with a gun, with no apparent effect. A few minutes later he was fired at by someone else, with the same result; and in the end he bounded away, disappearing amid the gloom of the trees and hedges. Who or what he was was never known. Since then, so far as I have been able to ascertain, there have been no more Spring-heeled Jack scares.

A ghost that in appearance and certain of its ways resembled, in some measure, some of the Spring-heeled Jacks, was the cause of two very sad tragedies in Hammersmith.[1] In January, 1804, the inhabitants of this locality were scared at night by a tall figure in white, which used to spring out on them from behind trees and walls. It was usually to be encountered, after dusk, in very secluded spots, such as certain out-of-the-way lanes and fields and deserted brickyards.

On one occasion, a woman was passing near Hammersmith Churchyard, about ten o'clock one moonlight night, when she saw a figure suddenly rise from behind a tombstone. It was very tall, and appeared to be clad in a winding sheet. Terrified beyond measure she attempted to run. Whereupon the ghostly being ran after her and, overtaking her, seized her in its long arms. She then fainted, and was discovered some hours later, still in an unconscious state, by some neighbours, who kindly assisted her

[1] See *The New Newgate Calendar*. Edited by Camden Pelham.

home. The shock to her system was so great—she was shortly expecting to be a mother—that she died two days later.

Not long after this tragedy, entirely owing to the ghost, an even more fatal one was narrowly avoided. The ghost, it seems, jumped out from behind a tree on to a wagon, drawn by eight horses and carrying, in addition to the driver, a man in the employ of Mr. Russel of Hammersmith, sixteen passengers. The driver was so scared that he leaped off his seat and ran away screaming, leaving the horses and passengers to look after themselves. Fortunately, the horses were soon pacified, and no accident occurred.

Accounts of these happenings spreading through the district, a downright panic ensued, no woman or child daring to venture out in the lanes or fields around Hammersmith after dusk.[1] While some believed the ghost was just a practical joker, others maintained it was the spirit of a man who had cut his throat in Hammersmith about a year previously. Parties of men who held the former view scoured the neighbourhood at night, to try and catch the supposed trickster. In this, however, they failed. There were many lonely spots around Hammersmith in those days, and when they were searching in one part for the ghost, it invariably turned up in another, frightening some poor rustic almost to death.

Among those who were bent on running the ghost to earth was a young man named Francis Smith. All along he had felt certain it was some heartless fellow belonging to the locality, who had dressed up, to frighten the poor simple country people, and he

[1] See *History of Hammersmith*, by Faulkner.

determined to make an example of him. Armed with a gun he betook himself to Black Lion Lane, one of the spots where the ghost had recently been seen, and concealed himself there.

By and by he heard footsteps coming along the lane towards his hiding place. Peeping out, he espied a figure in white, and believing it to be the ghost he called out: "Damn you, who are you? I'll shoot you, if you don't speak." There being no reply, and the figure still advancing, Francis Smith fired.

To his horror the figure instantly fell to the ground groaning. Realizing he had actually shot a man, Smith rushed off for assistance. It was of no avail, however, for by the time a doctor arrived the man was dead. He proved to be Thomas Milwood, a bricklayer, who was returning home from work rather later than usual that night, and was wearing a new white linen jacket, the usual habiliment of his vocation.

Smith gave himself up to the authorities at once. His trial took place at the Old Bailey before Lord Chief Baron, Mr. Justice Rooke and Mr. Justice Lawrence. The defence set up was that no bad design actuated the accused in his attack upon the supposed spirit, and many witnesses were called, who proved the alarm which had been occasioned by the visits of a supposed preternatural being.

The Lord Chief Baron and Mr. Justice Lawrence expressed it as their opinion that the case proven amounted to murder; and that if a man killed another by design, without authority, but from a supposition that he ought to be killed, the offence amounted to murder. The jury attempted to bring in a verdict of manslaughter only, but the opinion of the learned

judge being repeated, they returned a general verdict of guilty, and recommended the prisoner to mercy.

The Recorder, thereupon, passed sentence of death on the prisoner in the usual form ; which was that he should be executed on the following Monday and his body given to the surgeons to be dissected.

The Lord Chief Baron then informed the jury that he would immediately report the case to the King, and he did so with such promptness that before seven o'clock that evening a respite during His Majesty's pleasure was sent to the Old Bailey. A few days later the prisoner received a pardon, conditionally that he was imprisoned for one year.

The case created enormous interest, the court and its environs being crowded during the trial, and news of the respite was received with great applause.

The haunting ceased after the death of Milwood, but the identity of the ghost was never established. Some were still of the opinion it was merely a bogus ghost, a local hoaxster dressed to impersonate a ghost, while others were equally positive it was a *bona-fide* phantom, the earth-bound spirit of the aforesaid suicide.

Various houses in the Brompton Road have been from time to time, by repute, haunted.[1] In 1865 crowds went nightly to that road and stood outside a certain house there, in order to try to see and hear the alleged ghostly phenomena ; and, as a result, there was much disorderly conduct, which led to several people appearing in the police court.

Six years later some sensation was caused by stories of ghostly happenings in a house in the West Bromp-

[1] See *News of the World*, October, 1865.

ton Road. The tenants and servants in the house were disturbed, they said, not only by mysterious footsteps, knockings, and the ringing of bells in the night, but by a figure, enveloped in grey drapery, that used to appear in all parts of the premises. Its hands were usually clasped in front of it, and it gave all who saw it the impression that it was altogether good and in no degree evil. There was no hair on its face, but from its unusual height it was deemed to be a man. Like so many ghosts, it was shadowy and unsubstantial, and never seen save in the dark. It was discernible, owing to a luminous glow, which seemed to emanate from all over it. It never moved its head or hands, or spoke, or made any noise, excepting on one occasion, when, seemingly, it let a parcel it held fall to the ground with a thud. It moved with a gliding motion and, when stationary, gazed at people fixedly. Again, like so many ghostly figures, it usually vanished abruptly.

Beyond the nocturnal perambulations of this inoffensive apparition and the noises enumerated, nothing else of an abnormal nature appears to have happened in this house. The family alluded to here took it in 1870 and left it in 1877, moving to another house in the same neighbourhood, where, strange to say, the same phenomena occurred. But, in addition to seeing in their new quarters the same tall, shadowy figure in grey and hearing the same noises, they also experienced other phenomena, usually auditory, and much more disturbing and pronounced than those they had experienced in their former abode. Doors were now heard banging at night where no doors existed or where doors were closed ; and sounds like

metal trays being dashed down periodically awoke and startled everyone. Also, they heard, in certain of the rooms, noises like furniture being moved about; constant tramping up and down the stairs and about the passages, windows being opened and slammed to; loud sighing and heavy breathing; and, on one occasion, at least, a sound like a match being struck.

Christmas Day saw no immunity from the disturbances; the same figure was seen by one of the daughters of the family in the morning, standing on the staircase, and later on in the day at the foot of her bed.

After hearing some of the manifestations, one of the children, a boy, who was ill at the time, became very much worse through fright. He died two or three weeks later, and for some days prior to his death the noises were very pronounced.

The noises and the figure scared one of the other children and a housemaid very badly, too, but the generality of those who experienced the phenomena do not appear to have been in any degree adversely affected by them.

There was nothing in the history of the house, at least as far as could be ascertained, to account for the phenomena, nor could anyone discover, in either of the houses, any satisfactory explanation of the phenomena on physical grounds.

This case is strictly authentic, my authority for it being unimpeachable; and it is interesting inasmuch as it furnishes a very typical example of the really orthodox haunted house. In all such cases—and they form the majority by far—the phenomena appear to

be without rhyme or reason, and as to the nature of them, beyond the fact that it is apparently superphysical, nothing can be said with any degree of finality. Indeed, superphysical phenomena are still mysteries, as purely enigmatical as life and death.

CHAPTER XII

THE HAYMARKET THEATRE, HAM HOUSE AND CRANFORD HOUSE

ONLY a year or two ago, it was reported in the Press that a certain London theatre was haunted. I cannot say which theatre it was, because I have forgotten, but interest in this reputed haunting soon fizzled out, for the simple reason that the ghost proved to be no ghost at all, but something decidedly material.

For all that, one or two of the London theatres are known to be genuinely haunted. Who has not heard, for example, of the Haymarket Theatre ghost, supposed to be Buckstone's? Rumour asserts that the phantom of this erstwhile popular lessee, who succeeded as manager, in 1853, Mr. Benjamin Webster, has often been seen in one of the boxes and other parts of the building, and I have it on good authority that the door of a certain room in the theatre not infrequently opens and shuts of its own accord, that is to say, in a most inexplicable manner.[1]

Drury Lane, also, was said at one time to be haunted, but whether a ghost has been seen there very recently or not, I cannot say.[2] Managements are not particularly communicative on the subjects of alleged hauntings—in their own theatres. Neither are the authorities who run lunatic asylums. One at least of these institutions in London is known to be haunted.

[1] See *Evening News*, January 31, 1917. [2] See Addendum.

When there is no material inmate of its padded cell, sounds are heard proceeding from it, suggestive of "something" there trying to batter itself to death against the walls.

To revert again to the stage, a distant relative and friend of mine, the late Mr Edward Silward, who will be remembered for his extraordinary clever impersonation of a gorilla, a few years ago, at the Oxford Music Hall, once told me a remarkable experience of his on Wimbledon Common. He was crossing it, alone, one night, when suddenly a man in convict's clothes crossed the ground immediately in front of him and unaccountably vanished. Later on the same night, in exactly the same place, an actor friend of his had precisely the same experience. A man in convict's clothes suddenly appeared in front of him, and with equal suddenness inexplicably vanished. "This was the only time I ever saw what I believe to have been a ghost," Mr Silwood informed me.

I have been accompanied on several of my visits to haunted houses by actors, but as I have fully described these occasions elsewhere, I will not further allude to them here. I will merely add that I have found actors and actresses to be more interested in things superphysical than people in most other vocations of life. I think they are on the whole more spiritual and, perhaps, more inclined to be superstitious.

It was an actor who first told me that Ham House was haunted by the ghost of the notorious Duchess of Lauderdale, and those who, like myself, know this Duchess's history, will not be surprised to learn that she is still reputed to be earth-bound.

Ham House stands on low-lying ground near the

banks of the Thames, almost opposite Teddington. It was built by Sir Thomas Vavasour in 1610. The walls of some of the rooms in it are, or were up to a few years ago, hung with tapestry and other handsome draperies, having been left nearly in the same state as when the house was inhabited by Elizabeth, Countess of Dysart, afterwards Duchess of Lauderdale. She was the eldest daughter of William Murray, first Earl of Dysart. Her parents having no son, a Royal charter was obtained to enable her to succeed to the title. In 1647 she married Sir Lionel Tollemache, Bart., and if the portrait of her painted by Van Dyck,[1] probably about this time, be a true one, she must have been, then, very lovely. Sir John Reresby evidently thought so, for writing of an interview he had with her in her later years, he remarks, "She must have been a beautiful woman, the supposed mistress of Oliver Cromwell and at that time a lady of great grace." Had she not been singularly captivating, it is scarcely likely that the following contemporary lampoon would have been composed :

> "*She is Besse of my heart, she was Besse of old Noll,*
> *She was once Fleetwood's Besse, and she's now of Atholl.*"

In 1651 Ham House, which had passed from the hands of Sir Thomas Vavasour into those of the Earl of Holderness, and thence into the possession of William Murray, became the residence of Sir Lionel Tollemache and his lovely lady, who was later created the Countess of Dysart in her own right. Ever since

[1] See *The Abbeys, Castles and Ancient Halls of England and Wales*, by John Timbs.

then it has remained in the family of the Tollemaches, Earls of Dysart.

If Sir Lionel had ever expected his fair spouse to remain faithful to him, he must have been bitterly disappointed, for they were hardly married before she became steeped in "affairs." Courtiers and gay gallants flocked around her wherever she went, and there is little doubt that she encouraged and satisfied not a few of the best favoured Her carryings-on with John Maitland, Duke of Lauderdale, were too much even for the Court of those days, and the Merry Monarch's Court, in particular, as everyone knows, took a great deal of shocking.

If Sir Lionel was not aware of her goings-on, he must have been blind, but it is highly probable he knew only too well and acquiesced, from ambitious and even, perhaps, mercenary motives. Lauderdale possessed considerable political influence, and for that reason was well worth keeping in with, even if it meant sacrificing not a little self-respect.

For a while, however, after the Restoration, there was a coolness between the Countess and the Duke, due to the Countess considering the Duke was not sufficiently grateful for the service she had once rendered him. He was, in fact, one of her oldest flames, their friendship dating back to her pre-marriage days, and she was overheard once to remark to him that she only saved him from the scaffold by submitting to the familiarities of the Protector !

According to the historian Burnet, it seems pretty certain that Cromwell took a very great fancy to her, and that she met his advances more than half-way, being only too anxious to gain a hold over one so all-

powerful. In the end, his affair with her scandalized his puritanical followers to such an extent that he thought it wise to limit his visits to her and conduct them with the greatest secrecy.

To revert to her quarrel with the Duke. There seems to be good reason for believing that she soon repented of it, and determining to renew her ascendancy over him and make him more than ever her slave by marrying him, she got rid of Sir Lionel. That done, she at once made advances to the Duke, with the result the latter's wife left him, in a fury, and went to live in Paris. On her death, three years later —how she died does not appear certain, but it is not unlikely her end was as premature as that of Sir Lionel and due to the same agency—the Countess speedily became a Duchess. She and the Duke were married in 1671, and it was she who, from the very first, ruled the home. Consequently they lived in the most extravagant manner, trying to outdo Royalty in the magnificence of their entertainments. Her jewellery and costumes eclipsed in cost and splendour the jewellery and costumes of any other Court lady, and probably surpassed those of any other lady in Europe.

Only too conscious of her great beauty and her power over men, she thought she could do and say anything with impunity. She had no conscience, no shame and, at the same time, no fear. Owing to her outrageous ambition and greed, she would stick at nothing to gain her own ends; and, for this reason, as well as for her arrogance, vanity and scandalous tongue, she was both hated and dreaded, dreaded to such an extent that no one, however much they hated her, dared risk incurring her animosity.

No better proof is wanting of the fear she inspired in people, generally, than the fact that she lived to a ripe old age, in times when dark deeds of all kinds were common among all classes, and people, far less unpopular than she, paid for their unpopularity with their lives. She outlived Lauderdale by many years, dying in 1698. She was succeeded in her estates and title of Dysart by her eldest son by her first husband, Lionel Tollemache, Lord Huntingtower.

Now with regard to the ghost. We need not be surprised, perhaps, with the foregoing history fresh in our minds, that it is the phantom of the beautiful but infamous old Duchess that haunts Ham House. In the still hours of the night the tapping of high heels and of a stick are sometimes heard crossing the polished oak boards of various of the rooms and ascending the beautiful old staircase. Sometimes they stop outside one room, and sometimes another, and occasionally, not content with stopping outside, the Duchess, or rather her ghost, enters. According to Mr. Hare, the little daughter of a butler at Ham House had an alarming experience with it some years ago. She was on a visit, with the kind permission of the Tollemache family, when she was awakened in the early hours of the morning by hearing a curious noise in the room.

Thinking it was a mouse or bird, she sat up, and looking in the direction from which the sounds came, saw a little old woman kneeling by the fireplace, scratching on the wall with her long, claw-like finger-nails. Turning round, and seeing the child looking at her, the old woman got up, and leaning on the rail at the foot of the child's bed, stared fixedly at her. As

she did so the expression on her face was so terrible that the child, screaming loudly, hid her head under the bed-clothes. Fortunately some of the household were near at hand, and came running into the room. The ghost, however, had vanished.

On recovering from her fright, the child explained what had occurred, and the family, who were informed of it the following day, were so interested that they had the panelling where the ghost was scratching removed at once, which proceeding resulted in the finding of ancient documents, proving, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that the infamous Elizabeth, Countess of Dysart, had murdered her first husband, Sir Lionel Tollemache, in order to marry the saturnine Duke of Lauderdale.

Here, then, was that comparatively rare occurrence, a ghostly visit with a purpose, but, apparently, the discovery of the tell-tale documents, although it may have relieved the mind of the aged phantom, who seems at long last to have acquired a conscience, did not terminate the hauntings, for, according to rumour, they still occur periodically.

At some little distance from Ham House is Cranford House, in the neighbourhood of Hounslow, the home of that great sportsman, the Honourable Grantley F. Berkeley. In his *Reminiscences of a Huntsman* [1] he gives the following account of a ghostly experience that once happened to him there.

"At a very early age," he says, "my brother Moreton and myself were in the habit of going out at night with the keepers, to head them, if the poachers were expected in gangs; and this fact reminds me of a

[1] See pages 7-9.

curious circumstance, attended with some degree of the supernatural, that chanced to my brother and myself at the same time.

"When a man is alone, a vision of this sort may be set down to fancy; but when two young men, in no state of alarm or nervousness, see the same thing, and make to each other a corresponding remark upon it, it is strange if something more than mere fancy or phantasy has not invited their attention.

"A gang of poachers was expected, and just before twelve at night, my brother and myself, well armed, went from the passage by the servants' hall to the kitchen, intending to leave the house the back way. I was leading, and had just opened the door, when I saw the tall figure of a woman standing on the other side of the long kitchen table, which runs the whole length of the apartment, and as the door opened, her head turned slowly to look at me. She was in the dress of a servant, even to her shawl and bonnet; the latter, rather pokewise, shading her features, as she moved noiselessly along the table, as if going towards the fireplace. The light by which I saw her arose from a steadfast red glare of embers, left in the spacious grate, and as she faced it to look at and move from me, the direct ray from the fire enabled me to remark a more than common indistinctness of feature.

"Door in hand, the instant I saw her I addressed to my brother the word, 'Look!' His reply was, 'I see her; there she goes!' He, therefore, saw what I saw, as his rejoinder proved.

"At the moment the chief feeling in my mind was fun, for I took her to be one of the maid-servants, or a friend of theirs, up long beyond the usual hour of

my mother's house for rest. So I locked the kitchen door behind us, put the key in my pocket, and exclaimed, 'Come along, we will see who she is.' By the old fireplace stood the great kitchen screen, towards which she seemed so noiselessly to glide, and thither my brother and myself proceeded, dashing round either corner of it, expecting to catch her; but when we did so we met face to face, and not the vestige of a woman was to be seen. Speechless with astonishment as to where she could be gone, we searched every nook and corner, but there was no one in the kitchen but ourselves; our wonder still more increased when, on going out by the door into the scullery, we found that locked fast, and the key on the inside. The windows were too high, as well as fast, to admit of an escape by such means; and believe it or not, as you like, reader, whatever it was that had been seen by us had vanished.

"The apparition personated no one that I know, and why it appeared to us is a mystery, for neither treasure was indicated, nor warnings given; so what business the ghost was on, if ghost it was, remains a secret to this day."

Mr. Berkeley seems to think that this case of a ghost appearing without any purpose is exceptional, but I would venture to remark that more often than not ghosts do appear without any apparent purpose and perform actions for which there seems to be no object at all. They may, of course, have some reason for appearing to us and doing the things they do, and be unable, at present, to make themselves understood by us.

CHAPTER XIII

CLUB HAUNTINGS AND SOME STRANGE HAPPENINGS IN SOHO AND BLOOMSBURY

Not a few clubs in London are known to be haunted. I have heard it said that the ghost of "Old Q" (the eccentric Duke of Queensberry) is to be encountered occasionally on the staircase and in certain of the rooms of a well-known ladies' club in Piccadilly; whilst a room in a gentlemen's club in the region of Piccadilly Circus possesses a very sinister and ill-omened corner. Person after person, after sitting in this corner, has either been taken seriously ill afterwards or met with a fatal accident. Two or three years ago, a member of the club pointed out the corner to me, and very kindly suggested I should sit in it for awhile. I politely but firmly declined.

The premises of a night club in Soho, whose existence, like the existence of many other night clubs, terminated with dramatic abruptness, were—and I believe still are—haunted in a somewhat odd manner. In reference to this haunting one of the members of the club said:

"Several of us were playing cards in the card-room one night, when we heard a thud on the floor close to the table. It was so heavy and sounded so close to us that we all started and looked round apprehensively, fearing part of the ceiling had fallen. To our surprise, however, there was nothing whatever to account for

the noise. Thinking that there was something very peculiar about the acoustic properties of the place, we went on with the game, but it was not long before my partner suddenly left off playing and looked fixedly in the direction of a window that was opposite him. The rest of us then looked too, and saw an object, like an enormous cask, roll across the floor from one side of the window to the other and vanish by the wall. It was shadowy and indistinct, and moved without making the slightest noise. None of us had hitherto believed in ghosts or anything of the kind, but we were now bound to admit that what we had seen could not be accounted for, and must be attributed to some supernatural agency."

The house was old, and had, no doubt, during its long history, witnessed many tragedies, some discovered and some, perhaps, never brought to light. That the cask, whose phantom was seen by the card players, had figured in one of them is not at all unlikely.

Many stories of hauntings and other strange happenings were afloat some years ago when Shaftesbury Avenue and its vicinity gained unenviable notoriety through the undesirable female aliens living in it. Men were lured to dens of infamy by smartly-dressed women and cruelly blackmailed and robbed. It is extremely probable, too, that some of them were murdered. When the police raided the premises all sorts of devices were found, similar to those of the famous house in West Street which Jonathan Wild once inhabited. There were boards that lifted up in the floors, secret doors communicating with other rooms in the cupboards, and sliding panels in the

walls. A stranger once inside one of these houses stood little chance, for he was entirely at the mercy of a gang of thieves hidden on the premises.

Everyone knows about "Chicago May," but she was only one of hundreds, for London then teemed with women quite as bad as she was and, very probably, even worse. To grasp this, a student of character had only to glance at the painted faces of these women, for in their eyes one saw only hardness, and in their mouths grim determination.

I recollect a story I was once told about a haunting in connection with one of these women. I had gone to the St. James's Restaurant (Jimmy's) one evening, to meet a friend, and being early for my appointment, to while away time I got into conversation with a youth from Cambridge; and it was he who told me the story I am about to narrate.

On Boat Race night he went, he said, first of all to the old Lounge in Leicester Square, and then to the Empire. It was in the days, remember, when the promenade at the Empire was at its height and one saw there some of the most beautiful women in the world, women wearing costly gowns and jewellery, in many cases supplied by some man in the background who lived on their earnings.

All this, of course, is now a thing of the long past, remembered only by those of us who are middle-aged.

Well, the Cambridge undergrad, who had, so he informed me, indulged somewhat freely in strong drink, and was, on that account, not altogether responsible for his actions or inclinations, noticed one of the women in the promenade gazing very intently at him. She was tall, and fair, and very lovely; at

least, so he thought then ; and being also daintily and richly clad, she looked so chic and altogether seductive that he at once succumbed and spoke to her. As a result, they had supper together at an exclusive little restaurant in Soho, and then wended their way to her flat in Shaftesbury Avenue.

About half-way up the stone staircase leading to it, a tall man, in evening clothes and without a hat, dashed past them. As he did so, for one brief second his eyes encountered those of the undergrad, and the latter saw in them an expression of such wild and intense horror that he was perfectly appalled, and turned round at once to see where the tall man went. To his amazement, however, the man had vanished. He could not possibly have got down the stairs and out of sight in so short a time, and there was no possible place of concealment near at hand. The strangeness of the whole thing so alarmed and sobered the young man that, without a word, he ran down the stairs and out into the street, his companion the while, in a voice he barely recognized, calling out lustily after him.

Greatly impressed by the incident, particularly by the awful look of horror in the face of the man who had so unaccountably disappeared, the undergraduate made inquiries about the house, and learned, on excellent authority, that it bore a very sinister reputation. He was told that the woman who inveigled him there was one of a gang of German thieves and blackmailers, that she was suspected of something even worse, and that he had acted very wisely in not entering her flat.

Concerning a ghost and thieves, there are few more extraordinary cases than this :

A well-dressed man called one day at an apartment

house in Soho and inquired about rooms. He engaged a bedroom and sitting-room, and saying that his brother had just died and was to be buried in their family vault in Westminster Abbey, he asked the landlord if he would kindly allow the body to be brought to his house, till it was time for its interment, which would take place very shortly. The stranger spoke so plausibly that, incredible though it may seem, the landlord believed him, and as he offered to pay handsomely for the accommodation he required, readily granted his request. Consequently, the stranger arrived, in due course, with the coffin, and after seeing it safely deposited in a room on the ground floor, went out, saying that he was going to make final arrangements for the conveyance of the body to Westminster and would be back in about an hour's time. However, as hour after hour passed and he did not return, the landlord grew rather uneasy. He thought it quite possible that the stranger, who had told him that he had never been to London before, had either lost his way or met with an accident; but, finally, feeling very tired he went to bed, and told the maid-servant to sit up and let the new lodger in.

The maid-servant, therefore, remained up and sat in the kitchen sewing. After a time the grandfather clock in the corner struck midnight, and ere the echo of its last sonorous stroke had died away footsteps sounded on the stone staircase outside. Wondering who it could be, but supposing it was the landlord come to inquire if the lodger had returned, the servant listened. The footsteps were soft and seemed to be produced by someone in socks or bare feet. They came straight to the kitchen, paused for a few moments

outside it, and then the door slowly opened. The maid watched it with growing alarm and apprehension, and presently a white and hideous face was thrust through the aperture. The next moment a tall figure, shrouded from head to foot in a winding sheet, glided into the room and advanced towards the unfortunate servant. Hitherto she had remained in her seat, too paralysed with fear to stir, but on the figure approaching her, her faculties were at once restored. Starting up, she ran shrieking to a door in her rear, which communicated with a second staircase, leading to the upper part of the house. Up this she raced, screaming all the way, and entering a room on the top floor hid under one of the beds in it.

By this time the landlord and several other members of the household had been roused, and fearing the house was on fire they were all making for the front door, when they saw the shrouded figure coming towards them. With loud yells they instantly turned and ran upstairs again, never pausing till they had reached their respective bedrooms. They then locked and barricaded themselves in.

After a while, all being still, the landlord ventured forth, to find the lower part of the house in a state of confusion and the safe where he kept his money and other valuables broken open. Open, too, was the coffin and gone its inmate, who proved not only to be the shrouded figure, but a member of a notorious gang of thieves, the leader of which was Arthur Chambers,[1] the plausible "stranger" to London. Chambers was eventually caught and, being found guilty of innumerable serious crimes, executed.

[1] See *Mother Shipton's Miscellany*. Published 1878.

In this case, however, of a robbery engineered by Chambers, one had, perhaps, more sympathy with the robber than the robbed, the latter proving such an excellent example of the old adage, "Fools and their money are soon parted."

To revert to clubs. Many people will remember the Delphic Club in Regent Street. As several of its members declared thay had had curious experiences there, which they believed to be due to some super-physical agency, two ladies and myself decided to hold a nocturnal vigil on the premises. We selected for the occasion the night immediately prior to the removal of the club to its new premises in Jermyn Street.

During our vigil, which lasted several hours, we saw nothing of a ghostly character, but twice something odd happened.

We were sitting, in the dark, in the entrance to the club, when we heard a click, and the electric light in one of the rooms was switched on. The door of the room was wide open, so that, had there been anyone in the room, the moment the light was turned on we must have seen them; but the room was empty. After we had turned off the light, the same thing happened again. There was a click, and the room was flooded with light. Nothing further occurred, but these two incidents, especially when considered in conjunction with those stated to have been experienced there by certain other members of the club, do strike one as being, at least, strange.

What I was told happened at the Motley Club in Dean Street, Soho, was rather more definite.

The Motley Club, which was mainly for film

artists, served a useful purpose, and many regretted its abrupt demise.

One afternoon, a few weeks before its termination, a film artist, named Dickson, who was not, I believe, a member of the club, encountering a big yellow dog on the staircase, threw it a biscuit. Taking no notice of the biscuit, however, the dog walked by Dickson and descended the stairs leading to the ground floor. The following day, in precisely the same spot, Dickson again saw the dog. As before, he threw it a biscuit, and, as before, the dog passed him by without taking the slightest notice of the biscuit. Thinking this rather strange, Dickson turned round to look at the dog, but it had vanished. Much puzzled, for it was not possible for the dog to have reached the bottom of the staircase, and it could not otherwise get out of sight, Dickson resolved to visit the club at the same hour the following day. He did so, and in the same spot encountered the dog. This time he threw it a small piece of meat, and on the dog taking no notice whatever of the meat, he aimed a slight blow at the dog with his stick. The stick passed right through the dog, which at once faded away into nothingness, leaving Dickson amazed and aghast. He narrated the story to me himself one night at the club, and introduced me to another film artist, who testified to having also seen the dog. From what I gathered no one else, however, appeared to have encountered it, although one or two people told me they had sometimes experienced a very uncanny sensation when ascending or descending the staircase between the first and second floors. Ghosts of animals are by no means rare, as anyone acquainted with the lore of psychical research

knows, so that there is nothing very remarkable in the case I have just recounted. The phantom Dickson and his brother-artist saw may very probably have been that of some dog that had once been associated with the premises; it may have lived and died there, and have revisited the spot in spirit form through the ties of affection or some other deep emotion.

Bloomsbury being ghost-ridden no less than Soho, before concluding this chapter I will once more refer to the former. One of the strangest cases of a ghost being seen in this district was contained in a letter published in the *Daily Telegraph* in 1881. The letter reads as follows:

"In the latter part of the summer of 1878, between half-past three and four a.m., I was leisurely walking home from the house of a rich friend. A middle-aged woman, apparently a nurse, was slowly following, going in the same direction. We crossed Tavistock Square together, and emerged simultaneously into Tavistock Place. The streets and squares were deserted, the morning light and calm, my health excellent, nor did I suffer from anxiety or fatigue. The following scene was now enacted: A man suddenly appeared striding up Tavistock Place, coming towards me, and going in a direction opposite to mine. When first seen, he was standing exactly in front of my door. Young and ghastly pale, he was dressed in evening clothes, evidently made by a foreign tailor. Tall and slim, he walked with long measured strides, noiselessly, without a word. A tall white hat, covered chiefly with black crepe, and an eyeglass, completed the costume of this strange form. The moonbeams falling on the corpse-

like features revealed a face well known to me, that of a friend and relative.

"The sole and only other person in the street beyond myself and this being was the woman already alluded to. She stopped abruptly, as if spellbound, then rushing towards the man, she gazed intently, and with horror unmistakable, on his face, which was upturned towards the heavens and smiling ghastlily. She indulged in her strange contemplation but during very few seconds, and, with extraordinary and unexpected speed for her age and weight, she ran away with terrific shrieks and yells. This woman never have I seen or heard of since, and but for her presence I could have explained the accident, call it, say, subjection of the mental powers to the domination of physical reflex action, and the man's presence would have been termed a false impression on the retina. A week after the above event, news of this very friend's death reached me. It had occurred on the morning in question. From the family I ascertained that, according to the rites of the Greek Church and to the custom of the country he had resided in, he was buried in his evening clothes, made abroad by a foreign tailor, and, strange to say, he wore goloshes or india-rubber shoes over his boots, according also to the custom of the country he died in; these deaden completely the sound of the heaviest footsteps. I never had seen my friend wear an eyeglass. He did so, however, whilst abroad, and began the practice some months before his death. When he came to England he lived in Tavistock Place, and occupied my rooms during my absence."

This letter was signed "ARMAND LESLIE." He was a man of some distinction, having served through the

Russian-Turkish war with the Turkish army, was one of the twelve doctors sent out to Egypt at the time of a great cholera epidemic, and was chief of the medical department of General Valentine Baker's staff. He was subsequently killed at the battle of El Teb. It is not likely a man of his standing and experience would have made up the story of the ghostly happening, which one must, in consequence, conclude actually took place. It is not a pleasant idea that the spirits of those who have passed over appear sometimes as corpses, but there are many cases, such as the above, to prove that this is so. What can the Power or Powers be like who ordain such horrors!

CHAPTER XIV

THE THAMES AND KILBURN

THERE are several well-known hauntings connected with the River Thames, and anyone acquainted with the history of that river might well suppose there would be, for, in all probability, few, if any, rivers in Europe have witnessed so many tragic deaths.

A Thames tragedy comprising many deaths is narrated by Holinshed. It occurred in the reign of Edward I. A number of Jews, alarmed at the persecution of their race in London and fearing to be massacred at any moment, hired a ship, and putting all their treasure in it by stealth, embarked in it themselves. Unfortunately for them, the captain of the ship was not one of their persuasion. On the contrary, he was, apparently unknown to them, in sympathy if not in actual league with their enemies, and finding out that the Jews had secreted a vast amount of wealth on board his vessel, he resolved to have it. With this object in view, he cast anchor in such a manner that the ship was left on the sands, near Queenborough, at ebb tide.

Telling the Jews it was necessary for them all to disembark at once, in order to lighten the vessel and so get her free, he succeeded in persuading them to go on to the shore. He then got back into the vessel at once and, shoving off, left them all huddled together on the treacherous sands. As he departed, he called

to them mockingly, and said if they appealed to Moses he would doubtless save their lives, as he had saved the lives of their forebears, when crossing the Red Sea.

Whether they took this advice or not tradition does not say, but the rising tide gradually bore in on them, and one and all were drowned.

According to one version of the tradition, the captain of the ship was warmly praised by King Edward I for his treacherous deed, but, according to another version, he was hanged. Be this as it may, the spot where the Jews perished was ever afterwards regarded as accursed. Even when the rest of the river flows calmly, the water there is always more or less disturbed. It is said that, at times, those passing near the spot can distinctly hear moans and groans coming from beneath the water and see a gruesome bluish-green light hovering over it.

Jews, I believe, still go to that part of the river, where a goodly number of their race were once so cruelly done to death, to try to see or hear the phenomena.

Another of the Thames hauntings, according to tradition, is associated with one of the old ferry steamboats, plying between Greenwich and Westminster. A young man who was travelling on this steamboat, one sunny summer day, noticed sitting on the deck, rather away from everyone else, a lady, whose face was hidden by a black veil. Judging by her figure and hands, which were beautifully shaped, she appeared to be quite young, and the young man was, consequently, interested in her. When the boat was within a few yards of Westminster Bridge she suddenly sprang up and, to the young man's surprise

and horror, jumped overboard. In an instant he took off his coat and plunged in after her. Fortunately, he was an excellent swimmer, but though he looked around everywhere, he could see no sign of the girl. Concluding, therefore, that she had sunk, he swam back to the steamer and was assisted on board by several of the passengers and crew. Judge, however, of his astonishment, when the captain said to him, "You are the third person this week who has jumped in after that creature."

"What!" the young man ejaculated, "do you mean to tell me she was merely fooling? But what became of her? I could find no sign of her in the water."

"What becomes of her is more than I or anyone else can tell you," the captain rejoined solemnly.

The young man eyed him in amazement. "Are you inferring that she was something supernatural?" he said at length.

The captain shrugged his shoulders. "I don't know how else to account for it," he observed; and he then told the young man that, some time previously, a girl, who was the exact counterpart of the one he had just tried to save, had actually jumped off the steamer, in that same spot, and been drowned, and that ever since then the steamer had been periodically haunted by what he and others believed to be her apparition.

According to another tradition I have heard, and which appears to be pretty widely known and credited, the Thames, near Westminster Bridge, is haunted by a phantom boat. Two or three men, whose faces are too indistinct and shadowy to be recognizable, are aboard her, and she is seen to approach and go under

the bridge, but never to appear on the other side. People have searched for her on the other side, but they have never yet been able to discover the slightest trace of her.

Most people have heard of the cavalier ghost that haunts the bank of the Thames near Ham House.[1] One summer day, in 1885, about 5.30 p.m., a lady and gentleman, whom for convenience' sake I will call Mr. and Mrs. Tait, were walking along the bank of the Thames to Twickenham, where they had ordered a boat to meet them. When about half-way between Richmond and Twickenham, Mrs. Tait drew her husband's attention to a man stealing stealthily from behind her to her left side, where he hid among some trees. As he repeated this performance several times, Mr. Tait remarked to his wife, "I wonder what that fellow is dodging about for? He seems to be anxious to hear what we are saying. Let us get out into the open."

They then left the avenue of fine trees through which they had been advancing, and upon gaining the open beach they looked round and saw the strange man close to them. He was standing on the fringe of the avenue, and presented a very striking appearance, inasmuch as he wore a hat with a wide brim and long drooping feather, a cloak drawn round the figure and thrown over one shoulder, and high boots, turned down at the knee. He might have been a cavalier, *temp.* Charles I, and, apparently, what struck Mr. and Mrs. Tait about him most was his dignity. After gazing at him for a minute or so, something momentarily attracting their attention elsewhere, they glanced

[1] See *Sights and Shadows*, by F. G. Lee, D.D.

away from him, and when they looked in his direction again, he had gone. Upon resuming their walk, however, to their utter amazement, they saw him standing about 150 yards ahead of them.

Marvelling how he could have covered that distance in so short a time, they walked towards him, never removing their gaze from him. Then an extraordinary thing happened. Clearly defined one moment, the figure they were looking at suddenly became transparent, and gradually got fainter and fainter, till it disappeared altogether, leaving behind it nothing but empty space, and a bright open tract of land with no human object whatsoever on it. Realizing, then, that what they had seen could only have been superphysical, they were stricken with immeasurable awe, and hastened on to meet their boat, which, to their joy, they saw approaching them in the distance.

This account of the cavalier ghost is authentic; Mrs. Tait, who narrated it to Dr. Lee, being also known personally to the late Mr. F. W. H. Myers of the Psychical Research Society. The late Mr. Edward T. Bennett, a well-known Psychical Researcher, corroborated the haunting, as did Mr. R. H. Harper of Richmond, who testified to the ghost being seen by eight or ten people collectively. I have reason to believe that this haunting has not ceased entirely; it is merely getting more and more intermittent.

The interior of Hampton Court Palace, the Palace grounds, and the bank of the river that bounds them are all said to be haunted, not only by one ghost, but by several. Two of these ghosts, it is believed, haunt a gallery that has been termed "the haunted gallery" in consequence. They are the ghosts, it seems, of

Lady Jane Seymour and Queen Katherine Howard. Lady Jane Seymour, it will be recollected, successfully supplanted the unfortunate Anne Boleyn in the good graces of Henry VIII, and was thus, indirectly, the cause of Anne's death. Possibly it is this knowledge that weighs heavily on her conscience and gives her spirit no rest; but however that may be, wander her ghost does, not only in "the haunted gallery," but in "the silver-stick gallery," where it is seen at night, gliding noiselessly along, with a lighted taper in one of its hands.

The ghost of Queen Katherine is more harrowing. Tradition says that it was either in or near "the haunted gallery" that the final parting between her and her devilish husband took place. With sublime hypocrisy, on the day of Queen Katherine's execution, Henry went into the Palace Chapel—ostensibly to pray, but, more probably, to gloat over keenly anticipated joys with his next wife—and although told that his Royal Highness must not be disturbed at his devotion, Queen Katherine, breaking away from her guards, rushed into the chapel, to make a last appeal to him for her life. Her guards, however, following close upon her heels, dragged her out of the Royal presence, and shrieking and expostulating she was bustled out of the sacred precincts and through "the haunted gallery" to her fate. Therefore, perhaps, it is now said that her ghost rushes shrieking and screaming through "the haunted gallery," as if trying to escape from some invisible pursuers. Various people have testified either to having heard or seen Queen Katherine's ghost, among others Mrs. Cavendish Boyle and Lady Eastlake, whose apartments in

the Palace were close to "the haunted gallery," but, as in so many instances of hauntings, the face of this particular phantasm was not seen by them with any degree of distinctness.

Another phantasm stated, on good authority, to haunt the Palace is that of Mrs. Penn, the foster-mother and nurse of Edward VI. Some years ago the Misses Ponsonby occupied the rooms in the Palace which Mrs. Penn had once inhabited. Every now and then they and certain of their friends, who were visiting them, heard the sound of a spinning wheel in motion, apparently close to them. As they could not account for it, they were naturally much puzzled. Subsequently, some Board of Works' officials, who were doing something to the walls of the Misses Ponsonby's rooms, discovered an unsuspected room behind one of them and in it a spinning-wheel, that showed signs of considerable usage.

One one occasion, a soldier, chancing to pass the room one day, saw the shadowy form of a woman, clad in a long, grey robe, with a hood over the head and shoulders, glide noiselessly out of it. He was so scared that he took to his heels and ran.

On another occasion, a Palace attendant was sitting one evening on a seat in the garden, waiting for the inspector to pass on his rounds, when he suddenly felt an icy hand laid on his forehead, and looking up, saw a tall lady, with very white cheeks, dressed in an old-fashioned grey costume. There was something so eerie about her that he sprang to his feet, in terror, whereupon she inexplicably vanished.

The shock to his nerves was so great that, feeling he could not run the risk of seeing the ghost, for such he

believed it to be, again, he resigned his post in the Palace. It is generally believed that this phenomenon is the ghost of Mrs. Penn, though why she should haunt the Palace is not known. So far as can be ascertained she died there quite peacefully and happily. There may, of course, have been secrets in her life with which historians were not acquainted, or there may have been some secret mystery associated with her death ; or, again, her haunting may simply be due to interest in and strong affection for the Palace, where she had no doubt spent some, at least, very happy days.

Apart from these three ghosts, the Palace is haunted by other strange and unaccountable demonstrations and phenomena. The servants sometimes are awakened at night by feeling icy hands laid on their foreheads and cheeks ; sometimes the bed-clothes are snatched away from them, a not uncommon happening in hauntings ; and sometimes they see shadowy forms of a terrifying and sinister shape. Nor are visitors to the Palace entirely exempt from the experience of unpleasant happenings.

Two ladies were talking to one another, one day, in a certain room in the Palace, which, according to repute, is haunted, when there was a terrific crash, and the whole apartment was suddenly illuminated with a strange, gruesome light.

On another occasion, either in the same room or a room adjoining it, a lady resident in the Palace saw a huge black coffin. It was on the floor, partly covered with a sable pall. Terrified, she ran and told one of the attendants, who at once went to the room and likewise saw the coffin, whereupon she, too, ran away scared.

Several of the other attendants and officials then went to the room in a body, but when they arrived, there was no sign of a coffin anywhere.

While excavating at the Palace on November 2, 1871, some workmen unearthed two human male skeletons within two feet of the surface. Medical examination proved them to have been there a very long time, possibly from 150 to 200 years. The part of the Palace in which they were found had been rebuilt by Sir C. Wren about 1690, so that it is unlikely that they were there then; had they been, they could scarcely have escaped being seen. The supposition is that they were put there some few years after that date, and lime having been found with them points, of course, to foul play. Hence, to these skeletons some of the ghostly phenomena experienced in the Palace may, perhaps, be attributed.

Kilburn is some little distance from Hampton Court, but a haunting, even stranger, perhaps, than the hauntings at the river Palace, was associated with the Priory that once stood in this district.

The origin of this Priory is believed to be as follows: In the reign of Henry I, a pious individual named Godwin, wishing to live a very secluded life, built himself a hermitage on one of the banks of the Bourne, amidst wild flowers and trees. Few spots near London could then have been more lonely or lovely. In course of time it became known as Coldburne, Coleburn, Keeleburne, and finally Kilburn.

Godwin eventually growing tired of such solitude, granted his hermitage and the adjoining fields to the abbot and monks of Westminster "as an alms for the redemption of the whole convent of brethren."

Soon after this bestowal, the abbot, with the prior, and the whole convent of Westminster, at Godwin's request, and with the consent of the Bishop of London, handed over the hermitage and its lands to three virgins, by name Emma, Griselda and Christina, who were maids of honour to Queen Matilda, wife of Henry I. The hermitage was then converted into a nunnery, and Godwin was appointed Chaplain and Warden for as long as he should live; after his death the nuns were to be given permission to choose his successor. In 1536 it was surrendered to the Royal Commissioners, and in course of time it fell into a state of decay. In its latter years it was styled Kilburn Priory, and of Kilburn Priory now absolutely nothing is left. The ghostly tradition associated with it originated thus: [1]

Sometime during the early history of the nunnery there were two brothers, Sir Gervase and Stephen de Mertoun. Stephen became enamoured of Gervase's wife, and taking advantage of Gervase's temporary absence made love to her. Being true to her husband, the lady rejected Stephen's advances with scorn, threatening to tell Gervase. This so alarmed and infuriated Stephen that he determined to murder his brother. With this object in view, he hid in a narrow lane, in St. John's Wood, close to the nunnery, and when Sir Gervase came along, all unsuspecting, he crept up behind him and stabbed him in the back.

Sir Gervase fell, mortally wounded, and seeing Stephen upbraided him with his treachery and cruelty, adding, "This stone on which I lie shall be thy death-bed." He then expired.

[1] *Abbeys, Castles and Ancient Halls of England and Wales.*

Not in the least degree abashed, Stephen, in defiance of all decency, hurried to his brother's house and tried to seduce the beautiful young widow. Failing in this he had her confined in a dungeon, for just so long, he told her, as she chose to remain obstinate. He then seized all his brother's possessions and indulged in a great orgy.

After a while, however, his conscience awoke and oppressed him to such an extent that he ordered his brother's remains to be interred in a magnificent mausoleum in Kilburn. The stones of which this mausoleum was composed were taken from the scene of the murder, and among them the one on which Sir Gervase had breathed his last. From this stone, Stephen, when he came to view the mausoleum, perceived that blood was flowing, and his horror at this sight was so great that he, straightway, went to the Bishop of London and confessed his guilt to him. Furthermore, hoping, thereby, to atone for his crime, he bequeathed all his property to the Priory of Kilburn. Soon after this, overcome with grief and remorse, he fell seriously ill and died. For many years, subsequent to his decease, however, blood flowed from the stone in the mausoleum periodically, while the scene of the murder was declared to be haunted, few daring to go near it alone after dusk.

CHAPTER XV

HIGHGATE, HAMPSTEAD AND SOUTH KENSINGTON

FOR many years there stood, and was standing not so very long ago—indeed, I believe it may still be there—a very old and massive red brick house in Highgate. Ivy covered its walls, which were not unworthy of a castle ; rust was everywhere in evidence upon its handsome iron gates, and the paving stones of its courtyard were barely visible for moss. In its neglected garden there were curiously-fashioned yews, fountains, a statue of Pan, and a thatched summer house, all of which gave it an old-world character, reminiscent of the days of Queen Anne.

The entrance hall, with its broad, handsome staircase and gallery, was composed chiefly of black oak, and the extensive panelling to be seen in most of the rooms was of the same ancient order. No one, it seems, had lived in the house for any length of time, latterly, because it was haunted. The following story[1] which is connected with the haunting, is guaranteed to be true :

The house, many years ago, was occupied by a wealthy man, whom I will name here, for convenience' sake, Black ; and one Christmas Eve his son and heir, Ralph, an abandoned young rake, who had been away two years, unexpectedly returned home, ill. He was, in fact, so seriously ill, that his grieved parents had him

[1] See *Mother Shipton's Miscellany*, published 1878.

put to bed at once, and sent for a nurse to be with him at night. The nurse in due time came and was shown into Ralph's room. As the doctor had enjoined the strictest silence, she sat down by the fire and commenced reading, pausing every now and then to look at her patient and glance round the room. Like all the principal bedrooms in the house, it was panelled throughout with black oak, and its large antique fireplace was supported by massive buttresses. In the centre of the floor was a sepulchral-looking four-poster on which Ralph lay. The only illumination in the room, apart from the fire, came from a lamp, which was on the table by the nurse's side. It was a wild night. Every now and again blasts of wind beat the snow and ivy leaves against the window panes and, by way of variation, moaned and shrieked down the old chimney.

Outside, the garden and fields beyond lay covered in a white pall, which was momentarily thickening.

Anxious to see how her patient was, the nurse presently arose, and stealing gently up to his bed looked at him. He was on his back, apparently awake. His bright blue eyes were staring fixedly at her; his under lip had fallen, showing his long white teeth that projected fearfully from his shrunken gums, and his cheeks were sunken and hollow. One bony hand lay uncovered on the bed-clothes. Not wishing to stay by his side for fear of disturbing him, the nurse returned to her seat.

About midnight, she heard him breathing very hard, and looking round saw, to her astonishment, a heavily-veiled lady sitting by his bed. She was about to get up, when the lady raised a slender gloved hand

and signed to her to be seated and silent. Thinking the stranger might be one of her patient's relatives come to visit him, the nurse obeyed, feeling at the same time considerably puzzled as to how the lady could have entered without her knowledge.

From her slim and elegant figure the lady appeared to be young, but nothing could be seen of her face, on account of the black veil. Ralph's uneasiness increased, he tossed from side to side, and from his heavy breathing appeared to be in pain. The nurse again rose, again the lady in the veil signed to her to keep her seat, and again she felt constrained to obey. Overcome with weariness, for she had travelled all day, she closed her eyes. When she opened them again, the lady in the black veil had gone.

The following night, at the same time, the same thing happened. The strange lady suddenly appeared by the bedside, and, as before, her advent was a signal for Ralph to get suddenly worse. Alarmed by his restlessness and heavy breathing, the nurse got up, and, in spite of a signal from the stranger to remain seated, ran to her patient's side. As she did so, the strange lady moved to the table, her face still turned towards Ralph, whose eyes, starting from their sockets, never left her. The nurse now seated herself by his side, and succumbing to a sudden fit of drowsiness fell asleep. When she awoke, the strange lady was no longer in the room.

Frightened and mystified, the nurse crouched over the fire till the morning. When the doctor arrived, she announced her intention of leaving, declaring the task was more than her strength and nerves could stand. The doctor begged her so earnestly to stay,

however, that she finally consented, sorely against her will.

All day it snowed, and towards night a storm came on, increasing in violence the later it grew. The nurse, sitting by the fire, shivered each time the wind wailed and moaned round the house, and the ill-fitting shutters and window frames jarred and rattled. Occasionally, during a lull in the elements, she could hear the ticking of the death-watch in one of the walls and the scampering of a mouse in the worm-eaten wainscoting. As midnight grew near, Ralph became more and more restless, and the nurse more and more anxious and nervous.

The grandfather clock on the landing outside was striking midnight, when the nurse glancing apprehensively towards the bed, again saw the same strange lady seated by it, and, as before, her presence was a signal for her patient to grow worse. Presently, his breathing again so alarmed her that, disregarding the signs of the veiled lady to remain seated, she ran to the bed. This time she started back with horror.

Ralph's face was horribly convulsed, his eyes, fixed on the veiled lady, were full of such terror that the nurse was appalled. She spoke to him, more, perhaps, to hear her own voice in that dreadful room than from any other motive, but he did not reply. She touched his hand: it was cold as death. Thinking he was about to die she made for the door. The veiled lady at once took her place by the patient's bedside, and bending over him thrust her face almost into his. For a few moments Ralph's gaspings and writhings were more terrible than ever. Then they suddenly ceased, and the room became ghastly still and silent. Urged

by a sudden impulse, the nurse rushed at the veiled lady, who was now advancing towards her, and tore off her veil. Beneath it was no living face, but the grinning head of a skeleton. The nurse promptly fainted, and she was found still unconscious, some hours later, by the doctor and certain members of the household. Ralph was dead, with one hand across his eyes, as if to shade them from some object he dreaded to look at; the other hand gripped the counterpane.

That same morning the body of a girl, young and very beautiful, was washed ashore near Queenhithe. It had been in the water several days, and letters, in an ivory case, in one of her pockets proved that she had been on very intimate terms with Ralph, and that he had behaved very badly to her. Whether he was directly responsible for her death was not known, since it was never ascertained how she came to be in the water.

Those who were acquainted with the nurse's story were of the opinion that it was the ghost of the drowned lady that had visited the dying man, and probably it was; but, however that may be, the nurse never recovered from the shock of seeing the ghost, though she lived long enough to give a lucid account of all she had gone through on those three eventful nights.

After Ralph's death his parents left the house, and, subsequently, on account of the reputation it acquired for being badly haunted, it would never let for long, and in the end it doubtless never let at all.[1]

[1] A somewhat varied version of the story of this haunting appeared in *The New Monthly Magazine*, and was reproduced in *The Casket of Literature*, vol. ii, published in 1879.

A haunting by a somewhat similar ghost occurs in a house in Well Walk, Hampstead. My authority is a lady who once visited the house, and the story she told was as follows :

She said she had heard from her friends, who were renting the house, that it was alleged to be haunted by something that was sometimes seen on the staircase, but as none of them had ever encountered it, they did not believe that the house was haunted at all.

Well, the lady who told me this story, whom I will here call Mrs. Grey, since she did not wish her identity disclosed, for fear of trouble with her friend's landlord, went to stay in the house one wet summer, not so very long ago.

" You won't mind sleeping in the haunted room," her friend, the lady of the house, remarked, on her arrival, " all the other rooms are occupied."

" The haunted room ! " Mrs. Grey ejaculated. " Why, I thought it was your staircase that was haunted."

" So it is," her friend replied ; " but your room is supposed to be haunted too. I don't think you need worry though, for none of us have ever seen or heard anything unusual in it."

Mrs. Grey asserting her willingness to sleep in the room, she was forthwith conducted to it. Being very tired after a long journey from the Continent she fell asleep, almost as soon as her head touched the pillow, and did not awake till the servant rapped at her door in the morning.

The following night she was not quite so fortunate. Hardly had she got into bed, before she heard loud knockings in different parts of the room, accompanied

by light, stealthy footsteps and whispering. Concluding someone was in the room, probably to try and scare her, she got up and lit a candle, but could see no one. She was about to extinguish the light and get into bed, when there was a gentle puff and the candle flame was blown out for her. This broke down her fortitude, and she ran out of the room screaming.

She spent the rest of the night on a Chesterfield, in the drawing-room, and the following day was transferred to an attic, where a bed was hastily improvised for her.

Several days later, arriving home in a veritable downpour, she was going upstairs to her room, to change her clothes, when she saw a lady in a very smart though somewhat old-fashioned blue tailor-made costume ascending the stairs in front of her. The lady had, apparently, been out, for she was wearing a hat and carrying a sunshade, but strange to say neither her hat, nor dress, nor sunshade were at all wet. Wondering who the stranger could be, but supposing she was some friend of the family, Mrs. Grey followed her upstairs. On reaching the first floor, the strange lady walked quickly to the haunted room, and entering it, closed the door with a loud bang.

Mrs. Grey thought no more of the incident, but proceeded to divest herself of her wet garments.

The following day, which proved to be very hot and fine, she returned to the house, about the same hour, and again saw the lady in blue going up the staircase. This time, despite the dryness of the weather, the lady's dress and umbrella—she now carried an umbrella—appeared to be saturated. As before, she entered the haunted room, slamming the door behind her.

Considerably puzzled, and determined to solve the mystery, Mrs. Grey, without mentioning the matter to her friends, the people of the house (her reason for this is not apparent; possibly she liked doing things "on her own," or imagined her friends might think her inquisitive if she asked them who the stranger was), instead of going out the following day, remained indoors, and about the time she would have been returning, had she gone out, she repaired to the hall, whence, sure enough, she saw the same lady in blue, as before, walking upstairs. Mrs. Grey immediately ran after her, and followed her into the haunted room. The lady walked straight to the large mirror on the dressing-table and threw back the dark veil, which had hitherto screened her face. The room was full of sunlight, so that Mrs. Grey, who was close behind the lady, could see the latter's reflection in the mirror, absolutely clearly, and it was not the face of a living woman that she saw, but that of a ghastly, grinning skeleton. Mrs. Grey did not faint—she was not given that way—she simply left the room precipitately, and that very afternoon left the house. She never visited it again.

Her friends shortly afterwards vacated the premises, owing to the ghost having been at last seen by them too.

Another summer haunting takes place in a house in South Kensington. A Miss Wakefield, who had once been lady's maid in a family named Walton, took an apartment house in the above district, and had not been in it long before an alarming incident occurred.

A cousin of hers was spending the evening with her,

and as it was summer and the weather very hot, they sat in one of the unoccupied rooms, with the window open. About ten o'clock Miss Wakefield remarked, "You won't mind my leaving you for a few minutes, as I must go upstairs and see that the rooms are all right."

Her cousin replied, quite pleasantly, "Oh, dear, no." When, however, Miss Wakefield returned a few minutes later, her cousin appeared to be very upset, and observing that it was time for her to be going, hurriedly quitted the house.[1] Miss Wakefield did not see her again until some months later, when she met her in the street. She then seemed quite herself again, and as glad to see Miss Wakefield as Miss Wakefield was to see her. On Miss Wakefield asking her why it was she had not been to see her for so long, she said: "Well, as it is better, perhaps, that you should know what happened the last night I was in your house, I will tell you.

"After you left me alone in the room, I saw something so dreadful that nothing will ever persuade me to enter it again." She then informed Miss Wakefield that directly after she (Miss Wakefield) left her and went upstairs that night, a man suddenly appeared in the room. He did not enter by the door or window, but was simply there.

"He was dressed in white, with a death-like face, and a long beard."

After walking three or four times round the room, he disappeared through the wall near the fireplace.

[1] My authority (see *Ghostly Visitors*, by "Spectre Stricken") names no district, but merely says "in London." I have reason, however, for believing the house he refers to is in Courtfield Gardens, and that it is still, or was a short time ago, haunted.

Immediately afterwards, waves of something white came out from the spot where he had vanished. "It was awful to see," Miss Wakefield's cousin added. "Awful to see it. I could not cry out; I could do nothing, only sit there and watch."

Miss Wakefield then told her cousin that she would have been very surprised at hearing this, had not her servant, Jane, who had just left her, had almost the same experience. Jane, it appears, saw the same man that Miss Wakefield's cousin had seen, lying on the floor, with his arms folded on his breast, and his face and eyes looking like those of a dead person, although his eyes were wide open and staring, and she was so frightened that she had given up her situation and left the house immediately.

Some time after this meeting and conversation with her cousin, Miss Wakefield began to have alarming experiences in the house herself. She was awakened at all hours of the night by the most extraordinary noises. First of all she would hear a rushing noise, then things would, seemingly, be thrown down in the kitchen with great violence, although it was always found in the morning that nothing had been disturbed.

Jane's successor also came in for the phenomena. She was awakened one night by hearing footsteps on the stairs, and then a tremendous crash, as if numbers of trays had been dashed down on the tiled floor.

The room in which the ghost was seen was in the basement, and even in the hottest weather there was always a strange chilliness in its atmosphere.

According to a rumour in the neighbourhood, a butler had once committed suicide in the room, and

for years afterwards stains, supposed to be due to his blood, were observable on the floor, near the window. Whether they are still there or ever were there I cannot say ; but that the foregoing incidents are true, I have very good reason to believe.

CHAPTER XVI

BARNES COMMON, BETHNAL GREEN AND ST. ANNE'S CHURCHYARD

QUITE recently sensational rumours of a haunting were afloat in Barnes. It was said that people crossing the Common at night saw black-robed women, suddenly and inexplicably, appear and, just as suddenly and inexplicably, disappear.

As a matter of fact, it is by no means the first time that there have been such rumours. In the spring of 1879, the finding of certain portions of the unfortunate Mrs. Thomas on Barnes Common was followed by reports that a ghost had been seen hovering around the scene of the discovery. It was described as a woman dressed like a nun ; and its face, it was said, possessed one very alarming peculiarity. It lacked both eyes and eye sockets. Where the latter should have been was nothing but white and shiny flesh. When I was collecting material for my work on the Richmond murder of 1879,[1] I met several people in Barnes and Richmond who recollected hearing stories of this particular ghost. There is a reference to it in a work I have already quoted.[2] It is this :

A certain Mr. Smith (an old Oxonian) took a run up to Putney one March, in order to see the Oxford and Cambridge boat race, in which he still retained a

[1] Entitled *The Trial of Kate Webster* (Notable Trials Series).
[2] *Ghostly Visitors.*

very keen interest. Having dined with a friend in Hammersmith, he set off on his return journey, which led him across Barnes Common. When about halfway across it, he was overtaken by a youth named Brown,[1] whom he had met that night, at dinner, for the first time. Brown informed Smith that he was glad of a companion, as, on a former occasion, when passing the gate of the cemetery that borders the Common, he had got somewhat of a fright. He said that he suddenly saw a woman who, from her dress, appeared to be a nun, gliding along, in a curious zigzag fashion, on the opposite side of the road. There was something so eerie and unnatural about her that he took to his heels and ran.

This was Brown's story. Well, a year later, Smith met him again, by chance, in Putney, and they renewed their former acquaintanceship. When walking together past the cemetery one day, Smith asked Brown if he had encountered any nun ghosts lately, and Brown, replying in the negative, added, " But I have something of the same ghostly nature to tell you." Some friends of his, he told Smith, lived on the outskirts of the Common, their house being in a straight line with the cemetery. Their family consisted of three : Mr. and Mrs. West, and Miss Dester, the latter's sister. Mr. West's health caused his family and friends the greatest anxiety. About the time Mr. Brown saw the woman in black outside the cemetery, Miss Dester went to the front door one evening, to have a look at the sky, before retiring to bed, according to her usual custom. To her asonishment, stand-

[1] The names given in this story, the truth of which is guaranteed, are fictitious.

ing in front of her, at the foot of the steps leading out of the garden, was a woman, dressed, to some extent at least, as a nun. She had her arms folded across her breast, and was staring hard at Miss Dester. Feeling frightened, for there was something curious about the woman, Miss Dester called the maid-servant, who was then removing the supper things ; and the latter came at once, accompanied by the dog. As a rule the dog barked furiously at strangers, but, on this occasion, it did no such thing. It gave a glance at the woman, and then retreating behind Miss Dester, it nestled close to her and growled. As for the maid-servant, she stared wildly at the woman for a moment, and then clung to Miss Dester, who, obeying an impulse, slammed the door to. The rest of the household having retired, she did not disturb them, but went to bed as usual.

The next morning Mrs. West came down to breakfast, looking very pale and tired. She informed Miss Dester that Mr. West had had a very bad night, and that he had kept on declaring that there was a strange woman, like a nun, in one corner of the room, who never took her eyes off him. Again and again, Mrs. West tried to persuade him it was fancy, but it was of no use, he persisted in his statement that the woman was there, and that she was all the while glaring at him. He was so ill that he was obliged to remain in bed ; and he never left it, for he died that day.

This was Brown's story, and he told Smith he firmly believed that the woman whom Mr. West had seen in his room was the woman Miss Dester and the maid-servant had seen, and the woman he had seen, too, zigzagging about outside the cemetery. Whether

what Brown believed to be a fact in this case, was a fact, or not, one cannot, of course, say; all one can say is that in the realms of psychism no phenomenon seems to be too startling to be true. At the same time, all attempts to explain the why and wherefore of any psychic phenomenon has, in my opinion, up to the present, proved futile.

One of the most famous ghost stories of London is associated with Covent Garden. In bygone years there stood in the south-east corner of Covent Garden Market two hotels, known respectively as "Old Hummums" and "New Hummums."

The name Hummum is a corruption of the Turkish word Hamam or Humoum, a bath, and originally the hotels so named were hot-houses, that is to say houses containing hot sweating baths, or what are now styled Turkish baths. The custom of taking hot sweating baths was introduced into England several centuries ago and became, for a time, extremely fashionable (allusion to them may be seen in one of Ben Jonson's plays); but, after a while, they fell into disrepute, owing to their being frequented by bad characters of both sexes, and they were eventually suppressed. The two hot-houses in question were converted into hotels, probably at the beginning of the eighteenth century, and remained as such until they were pulled down.

The "Old Hummums" was demolished in 1881, and on its site was erected a large modern hotel, styled simply "The Hummums." I have not been able to ascertain when the "New Hummums" disappeared, but probably it was some years later. It was the "Old Hummums" that was the scene of what the illustrious Dr. Johnson described as "the best

accredited ghost story that he had ever heard." No book of London ghosts would be complete without it.

When Dr. Johnson and Boswell were visiting Mrs. Thrale at Streatham one day, the following incident, recorded by Boswell, from whose account of it I will quote, took place.

" Among the numerous prints pasted on the walls of the dining-room at Streatham was Hogarth's Modern Midnight Conversation. I asked him (Johnson) what he knew of Parson Ford, who makes a conspicuous figure in the riotous group. Johnson said, ' Sir, he was my acquaintance and relation ; my mother's nephew. He had purchased a living in the country, but not simoniacally. I never saw him but in the country. I have been told he was a man of great parts ; very profligate, but I never heard he was impious.' "

Boswell goes on to tell us that he next asked Johnson if there was not a story of Ford's ghost having appeared, and Johnson replied, " Sir, it was believed. A waiter in The Hummums, in which house Ford died, had been absent for some time, and returned, not knowing that Ford was dead. Going down to the cellar, according to the story, he met him ; going down again, he met him a second time. When he came up, he asked some of the people of the house what Ford could be doing there. They told him that Ford was dead.

" The waiter took a fever, in which he lay for some time. When he recovered he said he had a message to deliver to some women from Ford ; but he was not to tell what, or to whom. He walked out ; he was followed, but somewhere about St. Paul's they

lost him. He came back and said he had delivered the message, and the women exclaimed, ' Then we are all undone.' "

Continuing, Boswell says: " Dr. Pellet, who was not a credulous man, inquired into the truth of this story, and he said the evidence was irresistible."

Not relying entirely on Dr. Johnson or Dr. Pellet, however, Boswell, it seems, caused inquiries to be made at The Hummums itself, and at first the proprietors of the establishment were reluctant to say anything; but they finally admitted that the story about the waiter was true. Boswell concludes his reference to it with these remarks: " To be sure the man (*i.e.* the waiter) had a fever, and this vision may have been the beginning of it. But if the message to the women, and their behaviour upon it, were true as related, there was something supernatural. That rests upon his word, and there it remains."

A ghost story that is not so famous, though it is fairly well known, is associated with Bethnal Green.[1] Near the site of the old schoolhouse in Bethnal Green there used to be a public-house known as the " Gibraltar." For many years it was kept by John Harris, a native of Birmingham and silver-plater by trade. At first he conducted the house in a most exemplary fashion; but having made a lot of money he gradually got lax, and in the end he had to close down, the local authorities refusing to renew his licence.

The old adage that misfortunes never come singly proved very true in his case, for soon after his forced retirement from business, his wife quarrelled with him over his changed financial condition and left him.

[1] See *News from the Invisible World.* Edited by T. Ottway.

One night, soon after her departure, he was sitting by his lonely fireside, brooding over his misfortunes, which seemed almost too terrible to bear, when he suddenly heard the bell, in the now deserted bar, ring. Though rather startled, as he was alone in the house, having dismissed all his employees on the grounds that he could no longer afford to keep them, he did not stir from his seat, till the bell rang a second time. He then got up and went to the back door, thinking someone had entered that way and was indulging in a joke at his expense. The door and windows, however, were fastened. Much puzzled, he was returning to the warmth and comfort of the parlour—it was a cold winter's night—when the bell started ringing again, not so quickly as before, but more regularly, as if the hand that pulled held it for a while.

Considerably perplexed and perturbed, he armed himself with a poker, as it was the first weapon that came handy, and passed through the bar into the room beyond, where he saw a woman, dressed in a brown costume, resembling that formerly worn by Quakeresses, seated in a chair, between the two back windows. At first he was too overcome with terror and amazement to speak, for although the woman was by no means unprepossessing in appearance, there was something distinctly eerie about her, something that told him at once she did not belong to this world and which he instinctively associated with death.

Had he never done an evil thing he might have felt more courageous, but the knowledge that he had been living a thoroughly bad life made him horribly afraid and apprehensive. With a tremendous effort he summed up courage to speak.

"Who—who are you?" he stammered, clutching hold of the wall for support, for all the strength seemed to go out of his limbs, and he felt sick and faint.

"Who or what I am is not my business to relate," the strange woman replied, "but what you may hereafter become, if you do not amend your life, is my business to warn you. You have but a few years to live, make the most of them, and train up your daughter Phoebe in a good way. Be very particular whom she associates with, or she will come to a violent end. Remember her life is just now in your keeping, a short space of time will place it out of your power to avert the evil that awaits her. Your responsibility is very great. Recollect all this, John Harris, and live accordingly." She had hardly ceased speaking before she tapped the ground with a long stick on which she had been leaning, and immediately disappeared, leaving Harris paralysed with awe and amazement.

No better proof of the truth of this story, which Mr. Harris subsequently told to his friends, could be afforded than the sudden change that now came over him. From being a scoffer at religion, a heavy drinker and hard swearer, he took to going first to church, and then to chapel, and finally became a Methodist. He never touched a drop of alcohol again, and gave up using bad language. In short, he was metamorphosed from a blackguard into a really decent living person, and he remained such till his death. It was too late for him, however, to convert Phoebe. She had got mixed up with a gang of undesirables and, in the end, perished on the scaffold. In course of time the Old

Gibraltar Inn was pulled down, but up to the time of its demolition it was regarded as haunted, in consequence of what Harris was always convinced he saw there.

Another well-known ghostly incident in London is related in a work by John Taylor.[1] It occurred to Mr. Fox, the eminent member of Parliament. On one occasion, when he came to London, to attend the House of Commons, he took rooms in St. Anne's Churchyard, Westminster. He had been in too great a hurry at the time to pay any attention to the landlady or the servants, and it was not until he actually moved in with his luggage that he did more than casually glance at them. He was then struck with both the landlady and the servant who answered the door. They looked exactly like men in disguise.

Indeed, he was so unfavourably impressed with the mistress of the house, when she entered his sitting-room to know if he would like anything before he retired to bed, that he dismissed her very abruptly. Being very perturbed and apprehensive, he could not sleep for a long while, after going to bed, and when he finally did doze off, he had a horrible dream. He fancied some influence he could not resist compelled him to get out of bed and go downstairs into a dank and gloomy-looking cellar, on the damp, stone floor of which he saw the naked body of a man, covered with ghastly wounds. He awoke, sweating with terror.

The dream was so realistic that he became thoroughly alarmed, more so as he recollected his impres-

[1] See *Records of my Life.*

sions of the two women. Consequently, he got up in a panic, and dressing hastily was about to leave the house, when he encountered the landlady, fully apparelled, as if she had never gone to bed. She seemed much agitated at seeing him, and asked his reason for going out so early in the morning. Forcing himself to appear calm, for he was really terrified, he said he had to meet a friend in Bishopsgate Street and was bringing him back to breakfast. Apparently satisfied with this answer, the landlady suffered him to go out, and never in his life had he experienced such relief as when he found himself, once more, in the open.

He at once went to the house of a friend, and rousing him told him what had happened. His friend laughed heartily, assuring him it was imagination, as St. Anne's Churchyard was a very respectable neighbourhood, and hardly likely to harbour desperate criminals. He, however, agreed to accompany Mr. Fox back to the rooms. On the way to them they met a gentleman, whom they persuaded to go with them. On entering the house in St. Anne's Churchyard, they found it deserted; the landlady and servants had, apparently, decamped in a body.

The basement tallied exactly with the grim-looking place Mr. Fox had seen in his dream, and when they entered the cellar, under the pavement, there, in one corner, lay the naked body of a man, only too obviously murdered. Mr. Taylor does not say whether the murderers were caught; hence, presumably, they escaped.

In a previous chapter I described the haunting of an old house in Westminster by the ghost of a

cavalier. The narrator of the case did not name the street the house was in, consequently, it might well be that the house haunted by the cavalier ghost was the same house in which Mr. Fox underwent the aforesaid very unpleasant experience.

CHAPTER XVII

ST. PAUL'S AND CRIPPLEGATE

SEVERAL strange stories and beliefs are associated with St. Paul's Cathedral. One such belief is that when a clock is heard to strike out of order, more especially if it strikes thirteen, from no apparent physical cause, it portends some grave calamity; in the case of a great city clock like Big Ben or St. Paul's, a calamity of national importance. As an example:[1]

On the morning of Thursday, the 14th of March, 1861, "the inhabitants of the metropolis were roused by repeated strokes of the new great bell of Westminster, and most persons supposed it was for a death in the Royal Family. It proved, however, to be due to some derangement of the clock, for at four and five o'clock, 10 or 12 strokes were struck instead of the proper number."

The gentleman, who communicated the fact through the medium of *Notes and Queries*, goes on to say that on mentioning this in the morning to a friend, who is deep in London antiquities, he observed that there is an opinion in the city that anything the matter with St. Paul's great bell is an omen of ill to the Royal Family; and he added: "I hope the opinion will not extend to the Westminster bell." This was at 11 on Friday morning. "I see this morning that it was

[1] See *The Book of Days*, vol. i.

not till one a.m. the lamented Duchess of Kent was considered in the least danger, and, as you are aware, she expired in less than twenty-four hours."

The striking of thirteen instead of twelve by St. Paul's clock was once the means, as the following story tells, of the saving of a man's life.

John Hatfield, a private in the army in the reign of William and Mary, was tried by a court-martial on the charge of having fallen asleep when on duty upon the terrace of Windsor. He absolutely denied the charge against him, and solemnly declared (as a proof of his having been awake at the time) that he heard St. Paul's clock strike thirteen, the truth of which was much doubted by the court, because of the great distance. But, while he was under sentence of death, an affidavit was made by several persons that the clock actually did strike thirteen, instead of twelve; whereupon he received His Majesty's pardon.

This incident in Hatfield's life appeared in the *Public Advertiser*, and was contained in an account of his death, which occurred at his house in Glasshouse Yard, Aldersgate, on the 18th of June, 1770. He lived to the great age of 102. The following is an allusion to it in *A Trip to Windsor*, a poem by Timothy Scribble.

> "*The terrace walk we with surprize behold,*
> *Of which the guides have oft the story told:*
> *Hatfield, accused of sleeping on his post,*
> *Heard Paul's bell sounding, or his life had lost.*"

The story of how his life was thus saved was engraven on Hatfield's coffin.

One of the most extraordinary stories relating to

St. Paul's is told by Dr. Pritchard in his essay on "Somnambulism and Animal Magnetism."[1]

"A gentleman about 35 years of age, of active habits and good constitution, living in the neighbourhood of London, had complained for about five weeks of a slight headache. He was feverish, inattentive to his occupation and negligent of his family. He had been cupped, and taken some purgative medicine, when he was visited by Dr. Arnould of Camberwell. By that gentleman's advice he was sent to a private asylum, where he remained about two years. His delusions gradually subsided, and he was afterwards restored to his family."

This is Dr. Pritchard's prelude to a narration of the story that his patient, whom I will henceforth designate Mr. Deacon, when under the influence of the "delusions" from which he suffered, unfolded to Dr. Arnould. The story was this:

One afternoon in July, Mr. Deacon, feeling unsettled, went for a walk in the city and presently found himself in St. Paul's Churchyard. He was looking at some prints in the shop of Bowles & Carver, when a short, grave, elderly gentleman, in dark brown clothes, stopped beside him, and getting into conversation with him asked him if he had ever ascended St. Paul's to the ball, just below the cross. Mr. Deacon answering in the negative, the stranger proposed taking him up and showing him the magnificent view of London that was obtainable from the ball. Mr. Deacon expressing his willingness to accompany the stranger, the two dined in a neighbouring restaurant and then

[1] In the *Encyclopaedia of Medicine*. See also *Hallucinations*, by Dr. de Boismont.

made for the Cathedral. On reaching the ball they stood and gazed for some moments, in silence, at the extensive panoramic view beneath. The old gentleman then produced a mirror, the back and sides of which were decorated with symbolic figures, and placing it in the centre of the ball uttered strange cries. He left off, to ask Mr. Deacon, who was watching him with increasing apprehension, if he would like to see any of his friends who were a great distance away. Mr. Deacon, fearing to offend him if he answered in the negative, said he would like to see his father.

"Look in the mirror, then," the old man replied, and Mr. Deacon, obeying, saw in it a picture of his father, seated in an armchair, apparently fast asleep. Greatly alarmed, Mr. Deacon begged the old man to take him down into the street. The old man agreed to do so, but only on the understanding that Mr. Deacon should ever afterwards be his slave, to do whatsoever he might will. Mr. Deacon, feeling helpless to resist, acquiesced, whereupon the old man at once proceeded to escort him down the staircase to the street. On the way he pointed to a great bell, and Mr. Deacon heard sounds of laughter, anger and pain coming from it.

"That is my agent of hearing," the old man explained. "It communicates with all the other bells within the circle of hieroglyphics, by which every word spoken by those under my command is made audible to me."

The old man then conducted Mr. Deacon into the street, and went back into the building.

"Since that fatal interview," Mr. Deacon told Dr. Arnould, "the necromancer, for such I believe him

to be, is continually dragging me before him in his mirror, and he not only sees me every moment of the day, but he reads all my thoughts, and I have a dreadful consciousness that no action of my life is free from his inspection, and no place can afford me security from his power."

With regard to the hieroglyphics, Mr. Deacon said the old man practised his spells by means of them on walls, walls of all kinds, and when once the symbols were there, everyone near them came under the influence of the necromancer.

"Once," Mr. Deacon remarked to Dr. Arnould, "to try and escape from his tremendous power, I walked for three days and three nights, till I fell down under a wall, exhausted by fatigue, and dropped asleep; but, on awakening, I saw the dreadful signs before mine eyes, and I felt myself as completely under his infernal spells at the end as at the beginning of my journey."

Dr. Arnould asked him what these hieroglyphics were and how he understood them, and he answered: "They are signs and symbols which you, in your ignorance of their true meaning, have taken for letters and words and read, as you have thought, 'Day and Martin's and Warren's blacking.'"

This was the gist of the story Mr. Deacon related to Dr. Arnould, and which Dr. Pritchard reproduces in his essay. Dr. de Boismont, Dr. Arnould and Dr. Pritchard believed it to be a very good case of hallucination, and, of course, it may have been, although doctors are by no means always correct in their verdicts. They thought it not improbable that Mr. Deacon's statement that he had ascended to the top

of St. Paul's with a stranger was correct, but that the view he had seen from it had so impressed his exceptionally excitable mind that he had imagined the rest of his story, and, from continually dwelling on it, had come to believe it was really true. Be this as it may, other people beside Mr. Deacon have, from time to time, believed St. Paul's to be genuinely haunted.

When I was visiting St. Paul's one day, in the summer of 1899, two Americans, a lady and gentleman, came to me in a great state of excitement and declared they had just had a very curious experience.

"We were walking down that aisle," the lady said, pointing to the centre aisle, "when we both saw a great black cloud suddenly come out of the ground in front of us and ascend in the air. When about twenty feet up, it suddenly vanished."

I asked her if it were like smoke, and she said, "Oh, no. It was like nothing, nothing I have ever seen. It gave me the impression it was alive, and I was terribly frightened."

She certainly looked scared, for she was very white and trembled all over. The gentleman with her, who appeared equally alarmed, corroborated her story. They came away with me, and said they would go there again in a few days' time, when they had recovered their equanimity, to see if the same thing happened. Whether they did so or not I cannot say, for I never saw them again. Another lady told me that when resting in St. Paul's one day, she saw a woman kneeling in one of the aisles, apparently searching for something. Desirous of assisting her, she got up and was walking towards the woman, when she felt someone touch her on the shoulder. She swung round at

once, but there was no one in sight; and when she turned to look again at the woman, she, too, had disappeared, and not a trace of her was to be seen.

Several days later, when she was in the Cathedral about the same hour, the same thing happened. She saw the same woman kneeling in the same aisle, and as she was walking towards her, she again felt a tap on her shoulder. She glanced round immediately, but no one was there, and when she turned again the kneeling woman also had vanished. An eerie feeling then came over her, and she got out of the Cathedral as quickly as possible.

An unusual case of what some medical men might, perhaps, term hallucinations is narrated in a pamphlet[1] bearing the following title: "Strange news from the West, being sights seen in the Air Westward on Thursday last, being the 21st day of the previous March, by diverse persons of credit standing on London Bridge between 7 and 8 of the clock at night. Two great armies marching forth from two clouds, and encountering each other; but, after a sharp dispute, they suddenly vanished. Also, some remarkable sights that were seen to issue forth of a cloud that seemed like a mountain in the shape of a bull, a bear, a lion, and an elephant and castle on his back, and how they all vanished."

The author of the pamphlet says that on the 21st of March,[2] about or between 7 and 8 p.m., certain people in the city crossing London Bridge were astounded to see several clouds overhead, of the most remarkable and unusual shape. While they were looking, one of

[1] See *The Romance of London*, by John Timbs.

[2] He does not give the year.

the clouds suddenly assumed the shape of a cathedral with a tower in the middle of it. It then vanished. Another apparent cloud turned into a tree, spreading like an oak. Between this cloud and the first one was a big mountain, from out of which crawled a crocodile with its mouth open. It was suddenly metamorphosed into a bull; the bull into a lion; the lion into a bear, and the bear into a hog.

At the end of about fifteen minutes the mountain was divided into two shapes, each resembling an animal. One looked like an elephant with a castle on its back, and the other a lion. After a time, the elephant and castle disappeared and a number of men appeared in their stead, while the lion was converted into a horse and rider. A third cloud resembling a whale now made its appearance, and immediately afterwards a fourth cloud, like a human head or cap, with what appeared to be horns on each side of it.

Between these last two clouds there then were seen a few men, who marched to and fro and suddenly vanished, all, saving one, who continued to strut about with great dignity. Then, from close to the cloud like a head came an army, and, on the left of it, another army. The armies attacked one another with the greatest fury, and then suddenly vanished. Whilst they were fighting, a fiery flame was seen to shoot along the sky in the direction of the city. With its dying out, the visions ceased. These phenomenon are gravely reputed to have been witnessed by a number of reliable witnesses.

One wonders how the three doctors I have named would have accounted for them. If a hallucination could be experienced collectively much might be

accounted for, including, of course, the greatly discussed Indian rope trick.

The case of a ghostly dream,[1] which led to the discovery of a murder, is associated with that part of the city called Cripplegate. In the neighbourhood of Cripplegate, in the autumn of 1698, a Mr. Stockden was murdered. The motive of the crime was robbery, and the assassins escaped, without leaving any clue to their identity. Mrs. Greenwood, a neighbour of Mr. Stockden, dreamed Mr. Stockden came to her, and bidding her follow him led her to a house in Thames Street. "In that house," she thought Mr. Stockden said, "Maynard, one of the men who robbed and murdered me, lives."

She then awoke. With the dream fresh in her memory Mrs. Greenwood went the following morning to Thames Street, and identifying a house there as the one she had seen in her dream, she inquired whether a man named Maynard lived in it. She was told yes. In another dream Mrs. Greenwood again saw Mr. Stockden, who gave her a minute description of Maynard and of a certain wine-drawer. Both men were found from these descriptions and apprehended.

In a third dream Mr. Stockden again appeared to her and took her to a house in Old Street, where he said Marsh, another of his murderers, lived. She went to the street in the morning and found her dream was true. Marsh did live in that particular house. She had yet a fourth dream, in which she fancied Mr. Stockden took her over a bridge in the Borough, into a yard, where she saw a man and his wife. Mr.

[1] See *The Romance of London*, by John Timbs, and *News from the Invisible World*.

Stockden told her they were the Bevils, and that the man was also one of the gang that had murdered him. In the morning she searched for the yard, accompanied by Mr. Stockden's housekeeper. The yard proved to be the Marshalsea prison yard, and walking about in it were the man and woman Mrs. Greenwood had seen in her dream. The man was at once charged with the murder. He, Marsh, and Maynard were tried, found guilty and executed. The wine-drawer, who was a friend of Maynard, was not convicted.

The night after the execution Mr. Stockden made his final appearance in a dream to Mrs. Greenwood, and said, "Elizabeth, I thank thee; the God of Heaven reward thee for what thou hast done."

And there ends the account. Mr. Timbs merely quotes it, and leaves his readers to form their own opinion regarding it. If the Rev. Smythies, curate of St. Giles and Cripplegate, who published the story, in 1698, is to be relied on, and one can hardly imagine that he could have invented it, since he gives names and dates and localities, then it furnished a very interesting example of dreams that are brought about by some superphysical agency.

Another well-known story is also associated with Cripplegate.[1] A lady residing in Cripplegate, having lain for some time in a trance, was finally pronounced by the doctor attending her to be dead; and, in due course, she was buried.

The sexton having learned that the corpse had a valuable ring on one of its fingers determined to steal it, and, with this object in view, he went one night to the cemetery, accompanied by his wife. To an expert

[1] See *News from the Invisible World.*

like himself it was an easy matter to disinter the remains, and upon raising the lid of the coffin he at once caught sight of the ring. Being unable to remove it from the finger of the defunct lady by pulling, he decided to cut the finger off, and, aided by his wife, he was about to commence the job, when, suddenly, the supposed corpse sat up. The sexton and his wife then took to their heels, whilst the lady in her winding sheet, now fully recovered from her trance, stepped out of the coffin, and picking up the lanthorn the guilty pair had left behind them in their fright, quickly made for her home. After repeatedly knocking at the door, and pausing between the knocks, to listen, she finally heard the maid-servant approaching on tiptoe, after which a nervous voice inquired who was there.

"It is I, your mistress," the ex-corpse replied. "For God's sake, let me in at once. I am very cold."

Instead of opening the door, however, the maid-servant, with a loud yell of terror, ran at once to her master, to tell him that the ghost of his wife was knocking at the door. Fortunately, the gentleman in question was the possessor of strong nerves and much common sense. Discrediting the servant's story of a spirit he went to the door, and upon hearing the well-known voice of his wife, immediately let her in. Hot drinks and a warm bed prevented her from taking a serious cold, and in a short time she had fully recovered from her dreadful ordeal. Subsequently, she had, in due course, three children, and, besides, lived on to a good old age.

When she died she was buried in Cripplegate Parish Churchyard, and the story of how she had been pre-

viously rescued from the grave was inscribed, in brief, on her monument. The sexton and his wife having told someone, on the night they had fled from the cemetery, upon seeing the supposed corpse sit up, that they had seen a ghost, the lady they had unwittingly rescued from a terrible death was jokingly dubbed "The Cripplegate Ghost," a name by which she was ever afterwards known.

Whether the sexton and his wife were punished for their projected villainy the narrator of the story does not say; it may have been thought, perhaps, that owing to their scare, the two culprits had already suffered enough, and, after all, had it not been for their attempt to rob, as they thought, her dead body (the pain she must have suffered, owing to their futile efforts to remove the ring from her finger by tugging at it, undoubtedly brought her out of the trance), the lady who had been so unfortunately buried alive would very soon have succumbed to an agonizing death.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE COCK LANE GHOST

No supposed haunting in London ever created a greater sensation than the one that occurred in Cock Lane, between Newgate Street and West Smithfield, in 1760.[1] For a time it was the universal theme of conversation among the learned and illiterate alike, and in every circle of society, from the prince to the peasant.

The story may be told thus: At the beginning of the year 1760, a Mr. Kent, a stockbroker, lived in Cock Lane, in the house of a man named Parsons, who was the officiating clerk of the parish of St. Sepulchre's. Mrs. Kent had died, on giving birth to a child, the previous year, and Mr. Kent's sister-in-law, Fanny, had arrived from Norfolk to keep house for him. Presumably, they had conceived an affection for each other, for each made a will in the other's favour. Parsons, in whose house they continued living, and who was always in a state of impecuniosity or said he was, kept on borrowing from Mr. Kent; and as he refused to repay Mr. Kent, when asked by him to do so, a quarrel between the two men ensued, which resulted in Mr. Kent finding fresh quarters and instituting legal proceedings against Parsons, for the recovery of his money.

While this affair was still pending, Fanny was taken very ill with smallpox, and although, apparently, she

[1] *Chronicles of Crime.* Edited by Camden Pelham.

received every care and attention, she died and was interred in a vault under Clerkenwell Church. As has already been stated, she had made a will in Mr. Kent's favour; she had, one imagines, willed the whole of her property to him, but he had barely come into it, before it was rumoured in the neighbourhood of Cock Lane that she had met with foul play. This occurred at the beginning of 1762. It was said that the house owned by Parsons, in which Mr. Kent and Fanny had lived, was haunted by Fanny's ghost, and that Parsons' daughter, a girl of about twelve years of age, had, on several occasions, seen and conversed with this ghost, who told her that she (Fanny) had not died of the smallpox, as was currently reported, but had been poisoned by Mr. Kent.

Parsons was the principal agent in making the story of these ghostly happenings known, and he gave them as wide a publicity as possible. He declared that ever since Fanny's death (she died in 1760), ghostly knockings had been heard on the doors and walls of his house.

These statements, it seems, were believed by his neighbours and friends, who, doubtless, lost no time in imparting them to their neighbours and friends, and, consequently, the news that a house in Cock Lane was haunted soon spread, not only all over the city, but also into the suburbs. As a result, a gentleman called at the house to investigate the case, and was permitted by Parsons to do so, that is to say, he was permitted to do as much investigation as Parsons thought was discreet. He was shown by Parsons into Miss Parsons' room. The girl was sitting up in bed trembling violently. She declared she had just seen Fanny's ghost, who had again told her that she,

Fanny, had been poisoned by Mr. Kent. On leaving the room, knockings were heard in various parts of the house, and the gentleman, as gentlemen and ladies so often do on such occasions, came away mystified, afraid to doubt and yet ashamed to admit that he really believed, but with a promise to come again shortly and to bring friends.

The following day, he arrived at "the haunted house," with three clergymen and about twenty other people, including two negroes. Parsons informed them that although the ghost would never appear to anyone but his daughter, it would answer questions put to it by anyone present, and that it expressed an affirmative answer by one knock, a negative by two, and its displeasure by a kind of scratching.

The girl was then put into bed with her sister, and the bed examined by the clergymen, though why by the clergymen is not clear, since clergymen, as a rule, are far from being expert in the detection of trickery. The whole party of investigators then sat in the dark, some in the room and some just outside it. After a while, knocking was heard on the wall by the bed, and Miss Parsons declared she saw Fanny's ghost. No one else did. The following questions were gravely asked by one of the clergymen. (Mary Frazer, who had been the servant in Mr. Parsons' house, during Fanny's residence in it, and to whom it was said Fanny had been much attached, addressed the questions to the ghost; hence, presumably, her being afterwards proclaimed a medium, and the answers were given, as previously stated, by one knock for "yes" and two for "no.")

"Do you make this disturbance on account of the ill-usage you received from Mr. Kent?"

"Yes."

"Were you brought to an untimely end by poison?"

"Yes."

"How was the poison administered: in beer or in purl?"

"In purl."

"How long was that before your death?"

"About three hours."

"Can your former servant, Carrots, give any information about the poison?"

"Yes."

"Are you Kent's wife's sister?"

"Yes."

"Were you married to Kent after your sister's death?"

"No."

"Was anybody else, besides Kent, concerned in your murder?"

"No."

"Can you, if you like, appear visible to anyone?"

"Yes."

"Will you do so?"

"Yes."

"Can you get out of this house?"

"Yes."

"Is it your intention to follow this child about everywhere?"

"Yes."

"Are you pleased in being asked these questions?"

"Yes."

"Does it ease your troubled soul?"

"Yes."

(At this juncture a strange noise was heard, which someone present declared was the fluttering of wings, either spirits' or angels' wings.)

"How long before your death did you tell your servant, Carrots, that you were poisoned? An hour?"

"Yes."

(Carrots, who was present, was appealed to, but she stated positively that such was not the fact, as the deceased was quite speechless an hour before her death. This shook the faith of some of the spectators, but the examination was allowed to continue.)

"How long did Carrots live with you?"

"Three or four days."

(Carrots was again appealed to, and said that this was true.)

"If Mr. Kent is arrested, will he confess?"

"Yes."

"Would your soul be at rest if he were hanged for it?"

"Yes."

"Will he be hanged for it?"

"Yes."

"How long a time first?"

"Three years."

"How many clergymen are there in this room?"

"Three."

"How many negroes?"

"Two."

"Is this watch (held up by one of the clergymen) white?"

"No."

"Is it yellow?"

"No."

"Is it blue?"

"No."

"Is it black?"

"Yes."[1]

(The watch was in a black shagreen case.)

Nothing of further moment occurred at this sitting; but the news of it spreading, crowds flocked to the house, eager to see the ghost and to hear the mysterious knockings. Indeed, so great was the throng clamouring to get in, that Parsons found it expedient to charge a fee for admission, an arrangement which was, no doubt, very agreeable to him. Indeed, things had taken a turn greatly to his satisfaction, for now he not only had had his revenge on Mr. Kent, but he was in the way of making a decent bit besides.

Consequently, the ghost played its antics every night, to the great amusement of hundreds of people, and the great perplexity of an even larger number.

Among those who visited the house were Horace Walpole and Dr. Johnson. In a letter to Sir Horace Mann, Jan. 20, 1762, Walpole said:

"I am ashamed to tell you that we are again dipped into an egregious scene of folly. The reigning fashion is a ghost, a ghost that would not pass muster in the

[1] The code used on this occasion (subsequently referred to as a sitting), in 1762, is practically the same as that employed at modern spiritualistic séances. There is very little doubt it was the reading of or hearing about this case that inspired the Fox sisters in Hydesville, Arcadia, Wayne County, U.S.A., in 1848, to pretend their house was haunted. Any impartial person comparing the Hydesville case with that of the Cock Lane case cannot help observing a great similarity between them. In both cases a perfectly innocent man was accused of murder, but whereas the motive behind the accusation in the Cock Lane case was undoubtedly revenge, in the Hydesville case the motive would appear to have been, in the first place, merely a desire for notoriety, and afterwards, when the opportunity of making it occurred, money.

However, the lesson derived from both cases is the same, namely, that the employment of so-called mediumship may easily lead to false accusations, necessitating much persecution and great suffering.

paltriest convent in the Apennines. It only knocks and scratches; does not pretend to appear or to speak. The clergy give it their benediction; and all the world, whether believers or infidels, go to hear it."

In another letter he writes: "I went to hear it, for it is not an apparition, but an audition.

"We set out from the opera, changed our clothes at Northumberland House, the Duke of York, Lady Northumberland, Lady Mary Coke, Lord Hertford and I, all in one hackney coach, and drove to the spot. It rained torrents; yet the lane was full of mob and the house so full we could not get in. At last they discovered it was the Duke of York, and the company squeezed themselves into one another's pockets to make room for us.

"The house, which is borrowed, and to which the ghost has adjourned, is wretchedly small and miserable. When we opened the chamber, in which were fifty people, with no light but one tallow candle at the end, we tumbled over the bed of the child to whom the ghost comes, and whom they are murdering by inches in such insufferable heat and stench.

"At the top of the room are ropes to dry clothes. I asked if we were to have rope dancing between the acts. We heard nothing. They told us (as they would at a puppet show) that it would not come that night till seven in the morning, that is when there are only prentices and old women. We stayed, however, till half an hour after one."

Unhappily for Parsons, the ghost at one of these meetings was induced by the Rev. Mr. Aldritch of Clerkenwell to promise that it would not follow Miss Parsons whithersoever she went, but would follow

Mr. Aldritch into the vault under St. John's Church, Clerkenwell, where Fanny's body was buried, and would there give a notice of its presence by a loud knock on the coffin.

The eventful night, *i.e.* February 1, arriving, Miss Parsons was taken in a hackney coach, first of all to Mr. Aldritch's house, near the church, where a large number of people, mostly society people, were assembled. Among them was Dr. Johnson.

At 10 p.m. she was put to bed, the bed-clothes being previously searched by the ladies of the party to see she had nothing secreted in them. While the gentlemen were in another room deliberating whether they should proceed in a body to the church, they were summoned into the girl's room by the ladies, who declared the ghost had come, and that they heard knocks and scratchings. The gentlemen at once went into the room.

Miss Parsons, on being asked if she saw the ghost, replied, " No, but she felt it on her back like a mouse." She was then told to put her hands out of bed, and on their being held by some of the ladies present, the ghost was asked to say if it was in the room. There was no response. The question was put several times, and with the same result. Silence. The ghost was then asked to show itself, but the result was the same. Nil. It was then asked to give a token of its presence by some sound, or by touching the hand or cheek of any lady or gentleman in the room ; but again the result was nil.

The fact that when the child's hands were held no knockings or scratchings were audible, but whenever they were released in the dark knockings and scratch-

ings were at once heard, struck everyone present as significant, and one of the clergymen went downstairs, to interrogate Mr. Parsons on the subject. He emphatically denied there was any deception, and even declared that he himself had, on one occasion, seen and conversed with the ghost. The very lenient company deciding to give the ghost another trial, the same clergyman announced in a loud voice that they were all going to the church vault, to claim a fulfilment of the ghost's promise to manifest itself there.

Accordingly, at one a.m., they proceeded to the church, and the same clergyman and another gentleman entered the vault, alone, and took up their position by the coffin. The ghost was asked to appear, but it did not; it was then asked to knock, but it did not; it was asked to scratch, but it did not; and the two came out of the vault, convinced, at last, that the whole business was a fraud practised by Parsons and his daughter. The rest of the company were not quite so hasty in their verdict. After a serious consultation it was unanimously agreed that if the ghost answered anybody at all, it would surely answer Mr. Kent, the supposed murderer. He was, accordingly, asked to go down into the vault. He went with several other people and challenged the ghost to assert in any way possible to it, that he, Mr. Kent, had poisoned Fanny. There was no response of any kind. Mr. Aldritch then spoke, and conjured the spirit to end their doubts by making some sign of its presence and by indicating the guilty person. They waited for half an hour in the vault, and there being no response of any kind, they then repaired to the house, where they had left Miss Parsons in bed, and requested her to get up and dress

herself. When she had done so, she was strictly examined, but persisted in her statement that she practised no trickery, and that the ghost really appeared to her.

There are people who, if they want to believe a certain thing will believe it, no matter how forcible the arguments against it; in fact, cranks and bigots are just as numerous and rabid in these days of supposed enlightenment as they were in the so-called dark ages. Hence, many people, mostly women, upheld Miss Parsons, despite the positive evidence against her, and declared the spirit of Fanny had not manifested itself in the church vault because Mr. Kent had taken care beforehand to have Fanny's body removed. Mr. Kent, whose position was a very painful one, immediately procured competent and reliable witnesses, in whose presence the vault was entered and Fanny's coffin opened. Their depositions testifying to the body being in the coffin intact were speedily published; and, about the same time, the girl Parsons was fully found out. Being threatened by those investigating the case with Newgate, if she did not confess, she produced an apparatus on which she admitted making the supposed supernatural scratchings. She used to take it to bed with her and conceal it on her person. Her mother, she declared, was responsible for some of the knockings. Indeed, there seemed to be little doubt that the child merely acted under her parents' instructions, and, most probably, coercion.

Mr. Kent now brought an action against Mr. and Mrs. and Miss Parsons, the alleged medium, Mary Frazer, the servant, the Rev. Mr. Moor and the tradesman for conspiracy. Mr. Moor and the tradesman

were said to be prominent patrons of the fraud. The trial took place in the Court of King's Bench, July 10, 1762, before Lord Chief Justice Mansfield. It lasted twelve hours, and resulted in all the accused being found guilty. The Rev. Mr. Moor and the tradesman, after being severely reprimanded in court, were recommended "to make some pecuniary compensation to the prosecutor for the aspersions they had been instrumental in throwing upon his character." Parsons was sentenced to stand three times in the pillory, and to be imprisoned for two years; his wife got one year, and Mary Frazer, the servant, six months, with hard labour.

The girl Parsons appears to have got off, at least I can find no record of her being punished. Very possibly her youth and the undoubted fact that she was but the tool, albeit quite likely the willing one, of her parents weighed both with judge and jury.

As a rule, crowds were not kind to people in pillories and stocks. They not infrequently pelted them with dead cats, rotten eggs and other unpleasant missiles, but on this occasion they expressed sympathy with Parsons, and not only refrained from injuring him, but got up a subscription on his behalf.

Miss Parsons grew up and married twice, dying in 1806.

Mr. J. W. Archer, visiting the vault one day for the purpose of making a drawing of it, was shocked to see coffins and human remains lying about in a terrible state of disorder; and the sexton's boy, who was with him, pointing at one of the coffins, said, "That's 'Scratching Fanny.'" The lid of this coffin being loose, Mr. Archer looked inside and saw the body of

a woman. In his opinion, though how far he was competent to judge I cannot say, the body appeared to be adipocere, that is to say, in a state which he believed to be not uncommon in cases of arsenical poisoning.

In view of this statement made by Mr. Archer, and subsequently published, one wonders whether, after all, poor Fanny was poisoned. But even if Mr. Archer were right and the remains did show signs of arsenical poisoning, his testimony does not absolve the Parsons family of trickery. That they did practise fraud was proved beyond the shadow of a doubt, but it is just possible that they did honestly believe Mr. Kent to be guilty of murdering poor Fanny, and that the bogus spirit-rapping was devised and practised by them in the genuine hope that it would bring the crime home to him.

Mr. Archer's visit to the vault has therefore had a somewhat disturbing result, since, with regard to Fanny's death, it has raised questions and suggested doubts. Thanks to this visit, however, we get some idea of what poor Fanny was like. According to Mr. Archer's description, her face was oval and her features, which were all well preserved, were handsome. One imagines, therefore, that she must have been very prepossessing, as nice-looking as she was nice and amiable. Mr. Archer had no doubt that the body he saw was the body of poor Fanny, since the sexton's boy's statement was corroborated by Mr. Bird, one of the churchwardens. Mr. Archer, it seems, had asked Mr. Bird whose the body was that he had just been looking at, and Mr. Bird had told him it was the body of the woman whose ghost was said to have once haunted the house in Cock Lane.

CHAPTER XIX

STOCKWELL, WANDSWORTH COMMON, CHELSEA AND GHOSTLY CLOCKS

ABOUT ten years after the Cock Lane sensation, London was again thrilled by the report that a certain house was haunted. Near Vauxhall, in the parish of Stockwell, which was then a rather more select neighbourhood than it is now, lived an elderly lady named Mrs. Golding. Her household consisted of herself and her servant, Anne Robinson.

On the evening of Twelfth Day, 1772, Mrs. Golding was much startled at suddenly observing a most extraordinary commotion among her crockery. "Cups and saucers rattled down the chimney,[1] pots and pans were whirled down stairs, or through the windows; and hams, cheeses, and loaves of bread disported themselves upon the floor, as if the devil were in them."

Mrs. Golding, at any rate, must have come to the conclusion that the devil was in them, for she ran in a great state of agitation to her neighbours, and implored them to come at once to her house, to protect her from the devil. By no means unwilling to come to grips with his satanic majesty, Mrs. Golding's neighbours flocked to the house in numbers, and they were, probably, only too delighted at the prospect of a new subject for gossip. With the memory of the

[1] See *The New Newgate Calendar*, by Camden Pelham.

Cock Lane ghost still comparatively fresh in their minds, they did not feel particularly nervous.

Their advent at the house, however, did not put an end to the acrobatic performances of the crockery, which the neighbours, to their amazement, now witnessed. At first it was only the china that behaved thus inexplicably, but it was not long before the chairs and tables also began prancing and jumping, and things then began to look so serious that the neighbours, fearing the house itself would soon be following suit, thought it expedient to decamp. Left alone in the house with Anne, Mrs. Golding, in her terror, fell on her knees and implored the spirit to depart; but as it remained obdurate to her entreaties, and the crockery and furniture still continued to riot and racket, she repaired to the house of a kindly disposed neighbour, taking Anne with her. Soon after their arrival, the neighbour's crockery and furniture became restless, too. Plates and saucers cut mad capers on the kitchen floor, to be speedily joined by the hitherto sedate chairs and table. Finally, there was such a pandemonium and so many smashes that the neighbour thought it advisable to get rid of Mrs. Golding and Anne, before all his household goods were demolished.

Hence, back to her own house went Mrs. Golding, accompanied by Anne. Suspecting now that Anne was responsible for the disturbances, Mrs. Golding dismissed her, and forthwith all commotions in the kitchen ceased. Some time afterwards, Anne, in a fit of remorse, very unusual in servants, confessed to her new employer, the Rev. Mr. Brayfield, that she had been having a game at poor Mrs. Golding's expense.

Mr. Brayfield confided her confession to Mr. Hone, who published a detailed account of the whole affair. It appears that Anne, who seems to have been rather a prepossessing girl, as very naughty girls often are, had a lover, and being anxious to keep Mrs. Golding out of the kitchen, when her lover was about, she resolved to try to frighten her by pretending that the kitchen and the adjoining offices were haunted.

She, accordingly, placed the crockery on the shelves, in such a manner that it fell on the slightest motion and vibration, and attached strings, formed of horse-hairs, to other articles, so that she could jerk them down from an adjoining room without much fear of detection. A little practice at this sort of work made her very expert; indeed, a little more practice, and she would have proved a formidable rival to many a juggler. There is very little doubt that many so-called Poltergeist hauntings and phenomena worked by mediums could be thus accounted for, and they could be so accounted for if professional magicians such as the Maskelynes were employed as investigators, instead of high-brow scientists and people who, for pecuniary reasons, wish to preserve and bolster up mediumship.

A case that savoured rather of the Poltergeist order occurred in May, 1887, in a house near Wandsworth Common.[1] Its occupants were a man and wife, a sister-in-law and one child. Soon after coming to the house, noises, such as might have been caused by the striking of a muffled sledge-hammer against brick or stone, were heard all over the house. On one occasion, the sister-in-law felt as if someone were seizing

[1] See *Sights and Shadows*, by F. G. Lee, D.D.

her by the shoulders from behind, and shaking her violently.

This happened in the presence of the man, who seeing her swaying to and fro, in a state of terrible agitation, put out his hand to steady her, and felt a shock through it, right up into his arm, such as might have been produced by an electrical current. So sharp and painful was the sensation that he drew back, uttering as he did so a loud cry.

Nothing was discernible to account for the phenomenon. On another occasion, the bed-clothes were snatched off one of the beds during the night, and the occupant of the bed, being aroused, saw the bed-clothes rise up from the floor and move, propelled by some invisible agency, on to the bed again. Subsequently, the disturbances became so frequent and nerve-racking that the family were obliged to vacate the premises. Five families lived there, in succession, afterwards, and all left for the same reason. The house, they declared, was badly haunted. At last, it remained untenanted, no one daring to occupy it. There was no known reason for the ghostly manifestations. What eventually happened to the house is not stated, but, very likely, sharing the fate of many other haunted houses, it was pulled down.

A haunted house, with which I am well acquainted, is situated near the Crystal Palace. As in so many cases, the disturbances in this house are periodical. Months and even years may pass without anything unusual happening, and then, suddenly, ghostly disturbances occur. One of the tenants was sitting in the drawing-room one evening, with a friend, when both of them, suddenly, saw a picture on the wall

sway to and fro in the most remarkable fashion. Directly the friend got up and moved in the direction of the picture, it became still. The moment she sat down, it commenced rocking and swaying again. This went on for some minutes, and then ceased. No vehicles were passing at the time to cause any vibration in the room. Everything in the road, a very quiet turning off Gipsy Hill, was still, and there was nothing, apparently, to account for the phenomenon. On another occasion, a visitor in the house, being aroused from a siesta, one day, by the sensation that she was no longer alone in the room, upon glancing up, saw a tall, shadowy, hooded figure, in long black robes, bending over her. She was then so fearful of what might happen that she almost involuntarily shut her eyes, and when she ventured to open them again, the figure had gone.

A girl staying in the house, some years later, had a similar experience in the adjoining room. She awoke one moonlight night, to see, apparently, the same tall hooded figure, which she thought was a man in clerical robes, bending over her.

On neither occasion was the face of the figure seen. Yet another person to experience a haunting in the house was an actress, who took it for a brief period. Returning home, late one night, she was surprised to see one of the bedroom windows aglow with a light, that appeared to emanate from within.

Wondering what the light could be, she entered the house and, on approaching the room, saw a light under the door. On opening the door, however, the room was in complete darkness. She could discover no natural explanation of the phenomenon. She

dreamed very vividly one night that this particular room was occupied by a very grotesque figure, and waking in a panic, she was conscious of something entering her own room and standing by her side. She got the impression, for the thing did not manifest, that it was exactly similar to the grotesque figure she had seen so vividly in her sleep.

Immediately prior to the death of a relative of the owner of the house inexplicable knockings were heard by its occupants, and servants periodically complained of heavy footsteps, which they could not account for, following them from room to room. The house, which is called in the immediate neighbourhood the " mystery house," still stands, but I do not know if its present owners have experienced any continuance of the haunting.[1]

This case affords yet another instance of what may be regarded as the most usual type of genuinely haunted house, *i.e.* the house in which phenomena periodically happen with no apparent motive, except, perhaps, to alarm, and with no apparent cause. Maybe, at some future date, they will be explicable in accordance with some at present unknown and unsuspected physical law in the spiritual world.

In Chelsea, as one may, perhaps, imagine, there are several houses said to be haunted. One is on the Embankment. For many years it was occupied by a Scottish gentleman, with a large circle of friends and acquaintances. A very curious incident happened, when I and others were having tea with him, a few years prior to his death. He and I were talking to-

[1] I myself can guarantee that all the incidents I have narrated in connection with this haunting actually occurred.

gether, apart from the rest of the company, when he abruptly left me, and walking to the far side of the room addressed himself to someone else. Later on he explained his conduct thus :

" When I was talking with you just now," he said, " I suddenly saw the phantom figure of a woman lying on the Chesterfield, near us. Her head was lolling helplessly on one side, and there was an ugly gash in her throat, which appeared to have been slashed from ear to ear. I was so shocked," he continued, " that I had to move, away from it and you, to the other side of the room. Did you see it ? "

I told him that I had not seen the apparition that he had, but that I had seen something peculiar, though it may have been only an optical illusion. I then narrated to him what had actually occurred. I had, I said, naturally gazed after him as he left me, and while he was conversing with a lady on the far side of the room, I had seen a figure, standing behind him, that was the exact counterpart of himself.

" That is very interesting," he remarked, " because my projection, or phantom, or whatever you may like to call it, has been seen here by someone else."

He then went on to tell me that one day, when in his garden, he had looked up at the house, and had seen an exact duplicate of himself, leaning out of one of the windows, gesticulating.

A friend who was with him in the garden saw the figure, too. Another phantom seen in this house, he told me, was that of a bear. It invariably rose from the floor boards and disappeared near the fireplace.

The house, I subsequently learned, stood, according

to tradition, on ground that was once part of an estate in the possession of Anne Boleyn's father, and, in my opinion, it is not at all unlikely that as bear-baiting was much in vogue at that period, it was here practised, partly, if not wholly, to provide Anne's royal lover with an alternative pastime to courting.

If such were the case, the phantom bear would, no doubt, be the ghost of a bear that once actually lived and, probably, died on the spot where this particular haunting occurred.

A studio in the King's Road is reputed to be haunted, at times, by the ghost of a little old man, who is seen peering over the balustrade of the gallery.

Another Chelsea haunting is in Glebe Place, and of this I can speak from first-hand knowledge, that is to say, from a personal experience of it.

One summer evening my wife and I both heard sounds as of someone choking in the room adjoining ours. In the space of a few seconds, the sounds appearing to come from just outside our room, we opened our door immediately and went out on the landing ; but we could see no one. However, as we stood at the head of the stairs listening, we heard the sounds, first on the staircase and then on the first floor landing, which was the one immediately below ours. The same disturbing sounds went on down the next flight of stairs and into the hall, where they finally ceased.

There was no one in the house at the time but ourselves, and no animal, so that any explanation of the phenomena, on physical grounds, seemed impossible. It transpired, upon our making inquiries, that other people had experienced inexplicable happenings in the

house, but that their ghostly experiences were not the same as ours.

A house in the same street is said to be haunted by the phantom of a man on horseback; with regard to this phenomenon, however, I have not been able to obtain any reliable evidence.

One of the most unattractive ghosts I know haunts a house in Markham Square. The phantom is that of a nude woman with the face of a pig. She haunts one of the bedrooms, from time to time, and is generally seen in the act of leaning over the footrail of the bed, staring at the unfortunate occupant of it. According to my informant, an architect who once stayed in the house and saw this ghost, her limbs were well formed and her hands very beautiful.

Her head only, it seems, was abnormal, and so terribly monstrous was it that the architect refused to sleep in the room she haunted, again, and left the house, as soon as he possibly could. She appeared, he said, when the room was in absolute darkness, but could be plainly seen, owing to a light that emanated from her.

Having given a full account of this haunting in another of my works, I will merely remark before passing on, that its truth was vouched for to me.

There is a house reputed to be haunted in Wellington Square, and one in Poulton Square also: in both of them a very notorious murder was committed.

A house in Phillimore Place, recently pulled down, was haunted by an invisible ghost, that used to walk the house at night and make a sound as if it were striking a match. One wonders, if a new house springs up on the site of the old one, whether the same ghost will haunt it.

Redcliffe Square and Redcliffe Gardens both have their haunted houses, but as I have given particulars of the phenomena experienced in them elsewhere, I will not repeat them here.

To revert for a moment to the City, and to something which, although not strictly of a ghostly nature, is, nevertheless, I think, sufficiently associated with the superphysical to warrant an allusion to it here.

According to a correspondent in *Notes and Queries*,[1] there is an interesting tradition relating to the famous London stone in Cannon Street; a stone which was, and still is, perhaps, supposed, rightly or wrongly, to be under superphysical influence. It is enclosed in another stone with a circular aperture, and was the milliarium from which the Romans measured all the mileages in the kingdom.

What thrills one most with regard to it is the fact that it was once the altar of the temple of Diana, upon which the ancient British monarchs placed their hands, and at the same time took their oaths, on their accession, the rule being that until they did this they were merely kings presumptive.

Tradition avers it was originally brought by Brutus from Troy, and that it was he who laid it on its present site and ordained that it should be the altar-stone of the temple to Diana, and the actual foundation-stone and palladium of London. It was chiefly, perhaps, because it had been thus ordained London's palladium or talisman that it was always very carefully guarded and preserved, the belief that the fate of London was linked up with it (*i.e.* that so long as it remained where it was originally set, all would go well with England's

[1] See *Notes and Queries*, 3rd S., No. 1.

capital, but that London would be in grave danger of destruction should it ever be damaged or removed) being universally honoured and held.

Coming back to the orthodox haunting, an actor, named Robinson, whom I used to meet, occasionally, at the Old Actors' Association in Regent Street, once told me of a curious experience he and his family had in a flat that he rented in a house in Whitehead Grove, Sloane Square.

Besides hearing unaccountable sounds such as footsteps crossing the floors at all hours of the night, they would wake up suddenly to find that all the bed-clothes had been taken off them and carried some little distance away. Also, upon arriving home rather later than usual one night, they heard, to their astonishment, someone playing an old-world tune on, so it seemed to them, their piano. They went into the sitting-room, fully expecting to find someone there, but the room was empty, and the piano closed.

One evening, when alone in the flat, Mrs. Robinson heard sounds of satirical laughter just behind her. Thinking it was her husband, who had returned earlier than usual from the theatre, she turned round quickly, to speak to him, and was astounded to find no one there.

Perhaps the most remarkable of their experiences was a dual dream. Mr. and Mrs. Robinson both dreamed, the same night, that they met, on returning to the flat one day, a tall, thin, cadaverous-looking man in black, with a hare lip. He was in the act of leaving the flat, and had a yard measure in his hand.

They said to him, "Who are you? What do you want?" and he replied:

"Don't worry. I have just been measuring her, and she won't require one more than five feet long."

The man then bade them a polite good morning, and was about to pass them by, when they awoke. Struck with the singularity of the fact that they had each had precisely the same dream, they made a careful note of the occurrence.

About a month later they went on a visit to one of Mrs. Robinson's aunts. Soon after their arrival, this aunt caught a severe chill and died, and when the undertaker came to the house, to see about the coffin, Mr. and Mrs. Robinson identified him at once. Tall, thin and hare-lipped, he was the man they had both dreamed about.

He did not say, "Don't worry. I have just been measuring her, and she won't require one more than five feet long," but what his double in the dream said with regard to the coffin was nevertheless true, as Mrs. Robinson's aunt was only about four feet ten inches in height, and the coffin made for her was, consequently, well under five feet in length. Finally, the ghostly disturbances in the flat got on the Robinsons' nerves to such an extent that they left before their lease was up.

One of the strangest cases of ghostly forewarning in my experience occurred just before the Great War. Mrs. L——, an Anglo-Indian lady, living in Upper Gloucester Place, Portman Square, wrote to me about some strange happenings in her house, and asked me to call on her apropos of the same. I did so, and she told me an extraordinary story. She said one night, some years previously, she had been awakened by hearing an unusual sound. As she lay awake, wonder-

ing what it was, a clock on the landing outside began to strike. She counted twelve, but, to her surprise, the clock struck thirteen, then, after a pause, it struck again, and again, after another pause. After that there was a deep and impressive silence, which was presently broken by her husband asking her if she had heard the clock.

It struck them as so odd, that Mr. L—— made a note of it in his diary the following day. Some days later, the number of days corresponding with the strokes of the clock, when it struck for the second time, and at an hour corresponding with the clock, when it struck for the third time, Mr. L—— met with a serious accident, which ultimately led to his death. Mrs. L—— told me that various unaccountable noises had been heard in the house ever since she and her husband had been there, but she felt she must tell me about the clock, as it was the queerest of all their experiences.

Unfortunately, I did not commit her story to writing on the spot, and, consequently, when I came to narrate it in a book I subsequently published, I made some slight errors. These she reminded me of when I sat next to her, quite by accident, one night at the performance in London of " The Blue Bird."

" Do you know," she remarked to me, in between the acts, " I heard that clock strike thirteen again last night. It first of all struck thirteen, and then, after a brief pause, three. Do you think it portends anything? I have an idea it portends the death of a relative of mine, who has been ill for some time."

While she was speaking, an uncanny feeling came over me that it portended her own death. Of course,

I did not tell her so, I merely suggested that she should leave the house as soon as possible, as it obviously possessed some very sinister influence, which I could not help thinking was inimically disposed towards her, and she assured me she would.

Two days later, I read an account of her death in the *Daily Mail*. She was in a taxi with her dog and a friend, when they were run into by another taxi in Portman Square, and Mrs. L—— was killed. I do not think that anyone can fail to see that the accident in itself was remarkable. The window of the taxi furthest from Mrs. L—— had been smashed in the collision, and a piece of glass from it, missing Mrs. L——'s friend by the narrowest margin, had struck Mrs. L—— on the neck and severed an artery. That she bled to death within a few minutes is not to be wondered at, but it is surely, at least, worthy of note that in this accident, neither Mrs. L——'s friend, who sat close beside her, nor the driver, nor the dog nestling in Mrs. L——'s arms, were hurt. It was Mrs. L——, alone, who met with injury.

Among the curious and may be ghostly incidents connected with clocks is one relating to Queen Anne.

In the words of my authority,[1] Mrs. Danvers, the oldest and, probably, the most attached lady of her (Queen Anne's) household, entering the presence chamber at Kensington Palace, saw, to her surprise, her Majesty standing before the clock, gazing intently at it. Mrs. Danvers was alarmed and perplexed by the sight, as her Majesty was seldom able to move without assistance; she approached, and ascertained that it was indeed Queen Anne who stood there.

[1] Miss Strickland, the historian. See *Picturesque England*, by L. Valentine.

Venturing to interrupt the ominous silence that prevailed in the vast room, only broken by the heavy ticking of the clock, she asked whether her Majesty saw anything unusual there in the clock? The Queen answered not, yet turned her eyes at the questioner with so woeful and ghastly a regard that, as this person afterwards affirmed, she saw death in the look. Assistance was summoned by the cries of the terrified attendant, and the Queen was conveyed to her bed, from whence she never rose again.

Whether in this case there was any superphysical agency at work or not, clocks, in my opinion, do undoubtedly attract the Unknown.

CHAPTER XX

ENFIELD CHASE, SOUTH MIMMS, CHESHUNT, ETC.

SINCE Mr. Edward Walford includes "Enfield Chase and Cheshunt" in his work on *Greater London*, I will point to him, as my authority, for the inclusion of these two places in this last chapter of my book on London Ghosts.

From time to time sensational reports of ghostly occurrences in Enfield Chase and East Barnet appear in the Press. Many such appeared in 1926, and, according to these reports,[1] the ghost of Sir Geoffrey de Mandeville, the wicked Earl of Essex, who is said to have flourished, for a while, like the proverbial bay tree, in the reign of Stephen or thereabouts, and after committing all sorts of abominable crimes, to have drowned himself in the moat at Enfield Chase, walks about the Church Hill Road in the dead of night, in clanking armour, to the terror of every respectable citizen and all dogs; the latter demonstrating their horror by the most dismal howls.

Sir Geoffrey, so says rumour, is sometimes accompanied in his nocturnal peregrinations by a very beautiful phantom lady in grey, who occasionally glides about alone. Various people in East Barnet have testified to seeing her, both alone and accompanied by the phantom of Sir Geoffrey de Mandeville. The ghostly happenings in this neighbourhood, how-

[1] Vide *Daily Mirror*, *Star*, and other papers, December, 1926.

ever, are not always confined to out-of-door places. Close to the Grange Estate at East Barnet, and near some premises formerly known as "The Haunted Stables," stands a house, in which there is a cellar that is haunted, if we may believe report, by very extraordinary noises. These noises are said to resemble the low mumbling of voices and muffled thuds, the latter sounds suggesting the hauling about of heavy packages.

Here, too, by way of variety, a tinkling noise is occasionally heard, which noise appears to move round the cellar, whilst a shadowy form, too vague for description, glides about the floor. All these phenomena were vouched for at the time in the Press, and it was stated that people who ventured into the cellar to hear and see the haunting, came out of it with staring eyes and trembling limbs, vowing nothing on earth would persuade them to go there again.

That the more timid inhabitants of East Barnet were scared I know for a fact, for some of them told me so, and declared that they were too frightened to venture, alone, abroad, after dusk.

Apart from these hauntings, which break out every few years, strange stories are told of Camlet Moat, which, it will be remembered, is vividly described by Sir Walter Scott in *The Fortunes of Nigel*. Situated almost in the middle of the Chase in Trent Park, what now remains of the original moat is almost hidden from view by a thick growth of trees and bushes. Somewhere in the vicinity of this moat, according to tradition, is a deep well, paved at the bottom, in which lies the famous De Mandeville treasure. How it came to be there may be told thus: One of the De Mandevilles, being attainted for treason, feared that his life

and property would be forfeited; he therefore put all his money, no inconsiderable sum, and valuables in a strong iron chest, and hid the chest in the well that he had specially prepared for it. The well was then, as now, surrounded by trees, and in one of their wide-spreading branches, that overhung the well, De Mandeville used to conceal himself, and watch for the arrival of his enemies. One day, when he was thus occupied, he lost his balance, and falling into the well was killed. The well and wood then became haunted by his ghost, a tall figure clad in shining black armour, and, apparently, have remained so haunted ever since. Many attempts have been made to secure the treasure, but whenever the chest has been hauled up, upon nearing the brink of the well, the cord and chain holding it has given way. This invariable mishap eventually led to the belief that Mandeville's ghost still watches over his treasure and, owing to his interference (at the critical moment), it can never be purloined.

In 1832, on the road between Enfield Chase and Barnet, a Mr. R. C. Danby was cruelly murdered by a man named Johnson, and the spot where the crime was committed is still believed to be haunted. That it is genuinely haunted would seem to be apparent from the following story, told at a "talk" I once gave on "Ghosts," at my house in St. Ives, Cornwall. The narrator of the story in question was a summer visitor at St. Ives, named Ward.

He was driving one early autumn night with his uncle, a traveller for a large firm in the city, along the Enfield and Barnet Road. The sun had sunk below the horizon, and in lieu of purple, and gold, and

crimson, the usual effects of sunset, sad grey lines were streaking the already darkening sky. All around them, as they drove along (this was in pre-motor days when the road referred to was very little frequented), an utter silence reigned, a silence which they could feel, and which seemed to be merely intensified by the sharp clatter of their horse's hoofs and the low monotonous rumbling of their carriage wheels.

As the shadows of night were deepening, making the tall fir trees appear weirder and blacker every moment, a feeling of intense sadness and melancholy seemed to settle down upon everything and to add to the chilliness of the air, which was damp, too, after the recent heavy rains. Keeping to a fast trot they presently came to a part of the road which was made particularly dark and gloomy by the thick growth of trees and bushes on either side of it. Here the horse suddenly shied, all but unseating Mr. Ward, who was in the act of refilling his pipe, and then bolted. On and on it raced at such a breakneck speed that Mr. Ward was terrified, fearing that his uncle would lose control of it, and that a smash-up must come about sooner or later. However, when, in due course, they came to a clearing, and the moon, which had now risen, showed itself, between banks of slowly moving clouds, they were able to discern the cause of the animal's fright. Walking on the grass by the horse's side and keeping up easily with it, although it was going like the wind, was a tallish, bareheaded man. The moonlight falling full on his face made it appear deathly white, whilst, at the same time, it revealed a ghastly wound on one side of his head. On and on they went, rounding a bend in the road like a flash,

the phantom man still keeping abreast of them; and it was not until they had covered some considerable distance that he stopped at a certain spot, close to a gate.

As soon as they had left the phantom behind, the horse slackened speed. Mr. Ward and his uncle then turned round and saw the man still standing by the gate, staring after them. They could see him very plainly in the moonlight, but, even as they looked, he gradually faded away and vanished. The following day Mr. Ward and his uncle related their experience to some friends in Barnet, and learned, for the first time, that the road upon which they had seen the apparition was well known to be haunted by the ghost of Mr. Danby.

Other ghosts that are alleged still to haunt the neighbourhood of Enfield Chase are those of Dick Turpin and the Witch of Edmonton. Mr. Mott, the grandfather of Dick Turpin, lived only a few miles from Enfield Chase and Finchley Common, both of which places witnessed some of Turpin's most daring exploits.

Mr. Mott kept "The Rose and Crown," a public-house, near the brook called "Bull Beggar's Hole" at Clay Hill, and Turpin is said to have frequently stayed there, and to have hidden, when hard pressed by the king's officers, in Camlet Moat, then a very wild and lonely spot.

According to rumour, his ghost not only haunts the moat, the nearest roads to it, and Finchley Common, but South Mimms and Hounslow, as well. Sometimes his apparition is seen, clad in three-cornered hat, riding coat and high boots, hiding, white-faced and glassy-

eyed, behind a tree; and sometimes, chiefly on wild and stormy nights, it is to be encountered tearing along the high roads or across the fields on a huge black phantom horse, said to be the ghost of the renowned "Black Bess."

The Witch of Edmonton, who figures in the drama written by Ford and Dekker, was a real character. She lived near the Chase, some say in it, and, owing to gaining great notoriety for witchcraft, was ultimately burnt as a witch in 1622.

Her ghost is stated to be occasionally seen prowling about the site of the old moat and the more lonely parts of the adjoining roads. It is just a shadowy female figure in black, the figure, apparently, of a very old woman, who moves along, slowly and painfully, giving one the impression that but for her stick, upon which she leans heavily, she could not progress at all.

It has been remarked that there is no haunted house in the parish of Enfield,[1] but, according to Mr. J. Westfield,[2] there certainly was one, not so very long ago, in Enfield Chase. It was a very old house, he says, much beaten by wind and weather, standing in a very lonely spot, close to the Chase. Nearly the whole of the Chase, by the way, is now entirely enclosed, and but little of its original wildness remains. What wildness there is left is to be seen at Hadley Common, White Webbs Park, Winchmore Hill Wood and Trent Park. Formerly, it was an extensive tract of country, covered with trees, which afforded excellent cover to game, but it is now all cut up and most of it is built upon.

[1] See *Greater London*, vol. i. p. 369.
[2] See *Notes and Queries*, April 5, 1873.

Referring to the house he affirms to have been haunted, Mr. Westwood says :

" It was inhabited, when I knew it, by two elderly people, maiden sisters, with whom I had some acquaintance, and who once invited me to dine with them. I well remember my walk thither. It led me up a steep ascent of oak avenue, opening out at the top on what was called the ' ridge-road ' of the Chase.

" It was the close of a splendid autumn afternoon ; through the mossy boles of the great oak I saw

> . . . ' *The golden autumn woodland red*
> *Athwart the smoke of burning flowers.*'

The year was dying with more than its wonted pomp, wrapping itself in its gorgeous robes, like a grander Cæsar. On reaching my destination," Mr. Westwood goes on to say, " the sun had already dipped below the horizon, and the eastern porch of the house projected a black shadow at its foot. What was there in the aspect of the pile that reminded me of the copse described by the poet?—the copse that

> ' *Was calm and cold, as it did hold*
> *Some secret, glorying.*'

I crossed the threshold with repugnance."

Mr. Westwood was now to experience phenomena which have their parallel in other cases I have referred to in this and other volumes ; they are not uncommon, but, on that account, are none the less peculiarly alarming. Having to change for dinner, he was shown at once to his bedroom, where no sooner had the servant left him than he became conscious of a strange noise close to him.

It was a curious blending of shudder and sigh that suggested infinite fear. Supposing it must be due to the wind in the chimney or a draught from the door, which was ajar, Mr. Westwood began his toilet. In a few minutes he again heard this strange mixture of shudder and sigh just behind him; and wherever he went in the room he was conscious of a presence accompanying him and emitting, so it seemed to him, every few seconds the aforesaid somewhat distressing sound. Soon it got on his nerves, and feeling frightened, he dressed hastily and left the room. The presence, however, went with him, and on the landing and the stairs he heard the sound that was so perturbing, so indicative of unlimited dread. "Surely," he said to himself, "it won't follow me into the dining-room," but he was mistaken. Neither the bright light, nor the people, nor their cheerful conversation rid him of the ghostly sound that haunted him. Every now and again he heard it close behind him, and once he felt sure that the same eerie presence, that had so persistently followed him, was sharing the same chair with him.

This very unpleasant sensation lasted all through the meal and afterwards in the drawing-room; and it was not until he had said good-night to his hostess and stepped out into the darkness of the night that he was freed from it.

When Mr. Westwood next met the two maiden ladies, he told them what had occurred, and instead of finding them incredulous, as he half-expected he should, they told him that they and other people had often heard the sound he described, and had been followed all over the house by it, in just the same

manner. They could give no explanation of the phenomenon. It was always the same, just a sound, they explained, nothing ghostly was ever seen.

"Perhaps so," Mr. Westwood remarks, "but of what strange horror, not ended with life, but perpetuated in the limbo of invisible things, was that sound the exponent?"

I have already referred to South Mimms as being, no less than Enfield Chase, associated with the notorious Dick Turpin; and like Enfield Chase it not infrequently figures in the Press in connection with rumoured hauntings. Presumably it is styled South Mimms to distinguish it from its neighbour North Mimms. The word Mimms has been variously spelt in the past Mims, Mymes and Mymmes.

According to a tradition, how far true I have been unable to ascertain, a lady was murdered either in the church, dedicated to St. Giles, or in the adjoining vicarage, by Cromwell's soldiers, since which time a ghost is said to have haunted the churchyard and its immediate environments. Intermittently, that is to say, at long intervals, it is said to appear in the guise of a woman in white, but, in spite of many inquiries in South Mimms, I have not come across anyone who can say definitely that he has seen it. I have, however, met one or two people who can testify to having seen what they believed to be ghost lights, hovering over a tomb in the old churchyard. The phenomena occurred, they said, immediately after the tomb had been opened for a burial, the lights having been seen by them on several consecutive nights after the burial had taken place.

According to tradition, the ghost of Dick Turpin

haunts the old Roman Road, at a spot locally known as the Wash, and possibly the reason is not far to seek, since the famous highwayman, in his lifetime, frequented this neighbourhood more often, perhaps, than any other.

The Wash is a lonely strip of low-lying, swampy ground, with a certain eeriness about it, after dusk, which I myself have experienced ; and there is a story to the effect that not long ago a man crossing the Wash bridge saw a strange figure, something like a man but not a man, and something like an animal and yet not an animal, rise from the ground, leap high over the bridge, with a gigantic spring, and disappear in the mist-covered ground beneath. There was something so grotesque and monstrous about the figure that the man who saw it was terrified and took to his heels.

Last autumn interest in South Mimms was revived by the discovery in a field, near the village, of the body of an aged tramp. It was generally believed, and still is believed by some people, that he had been murdered, but medical testimony declared that he had died of fatty degeneration of the heart. It was subsequently rumoured that the spot where he was found was haunted by ghostly lights and the shadowy figure of a man minus his head.

This tramp is not the only person who has been found dead, in a field, at South Mimms, under mysterious circumstances. As far back as 1861 the body of a woman was discovered in a ditch, in a field, close to the village.[1] She was identified as a woman who had been missing for some months. A party of women had been at work haymaking in the field where her

[1] *News of the World*, March 10, 1861.

body was found, and she had been one of them. No one, it seems, noticed her absence at the time, and it was not until her fellow-workers had dispersed to their various homes that she was found to be missing. The whole neighbourhood was then searched, but without success, and nothing was seen or heard of her, till her remains were found in the aforesaid ditch the following March. The body being very much decomposed, the exact cause of death could not be ascertained; consequently, an open verdict was returned; but it was generally thought that she was the victim of foul play. The spot where she was found, subsequently, got the reputation for being haunted and was shunned in consequence. It would seem from these two cases that there is something in the immediate vicinity of South Mimms conducive to happenings of this nature.

Cheshunt is not very far from South Mimms and, according to Mr. W. Howitt,[1] it boasted, during his lifetime, a very notoriously haunted house. Mrs. Crowe refers to it, but does not give its exact locality. She merely places it "in the neighbourhood of the Metropolis."

Mr. Howitt, however, could have had no great difficulty in identifying it, since it seems to have been termed the "Haunted House" by those residing in its neighbourhood. I do not know whether anything now remains of this haunted house; all I can say is that it stood intact not many years ago. In appearance it was very arrestive, a long, low, rambling structure, standing in grounds, which were once very extensive. The account given by Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kean, the famous stage stars, to both Mrs. Crowe and Mr.

[1] See *History of the Supernatural.*

Howitt of what befell Mr. Chapman (Mr. Kean's brother-in-law) during his occupancy of the house, being somewhat drawn out, I will append it here, slightly abridged, but otherwise not materially altered.[1]

The Chapmans, the Keans observe, had bought the seven years' lease of the house at so low a figure that one wonders why their suspicions were not aroused, but being young they had, doubtless, had very little experience of houses. For some time after they took over the premises all went well, and they were congratulating themselves on their purchase when the totally unexpected happened. Mrs. Chapman, going into a room they had named the Oak Room, one evening, saw a girl, a complete stranger to her, leaning against the window, and gazing anxiously out, as if expecting someone to arrive. The girl was young; she had dark hair hanging loosely about her neck and shoulders, and appeared to be only partly dressed, as she was wearing a short white bodice and silk petticoat. Wondering if she were the victim of a hallucination, Mrs. Chapman closed her eyes, and when she opened them again, the strange girl had vanished. This was the first intimation that the Chapmans had that the house was haunted.

Shortly after this incident, the nurserymaid, a dependable girl, when passing by the lobby that led to an enclosed courtyard, saw a hideous white face peering in at her. The owner of the face was an old woman, and she was clad in the fashion of a bygone period. The maid was so frightened that she ran at once to Mrs. Chapman, and, trembling all over, told her what had happened. Mrs. Chapman went into

[1] See *The Night Side of Nature*, by Catherine Crowe.

the courtyard, the outer gate of which was locked, and searched everywhere, but there was no trace of the old woman the nurserymaid had seen.

The next thing that happened was that the family were disturbed at night by all kinds of unaccountable noises. Sometimes they would be roused from their sleep by the sound of pumping in the courtyard (this would happen when it was ascertained that everyone was in bed), and sometimes, in the dead of night, they would hear crashes and footsteps. Also, in the daytime, once, ghostly footsteps followed a servant to the fireplace in the oak room. Naturally, thinking, at first, that they were those of a fellow-servant, the maid, whom the footsteps had followed, looked round, and upon seeing no one, was almost frightened out of her wits. These same footsteps, it seems, approached Mrs. Chapman's bedroom one night, and as they halted outside it, Mrs. Chapman, summoning up all her courage, opened the door and looked out, but no one was there, and she saw only the moonbeams and shadows. Again, when the Chapmans were seated in the drawing-room with the door shut, it frequently happened that they would hear the door handle turned and see the door open ; and, although they never saw anyone enter, they always felt, on these occasions, that something did come in, and that it stood by, watching them.

One night, the servant who had been followed by the footsteps had a strange dream. She was sleeping at the time in Mrs. Chapman's room, so that she, Mrs. Chapman, should not be nervous during Mr. Chapman's temporary absence from home. To proceed: this servant, in her dream, thought she was in the oak

room and that, suddenly, she saw there a girl, with long dark hair, standing opposite a dreadful-looking old hag. Both wore costumes in accordance with the fashion of more than a century ago. The old woman, after gazing intently at the girl with the long, dark hair, exclaimed, "What have you done with the child, Emily? What have you done with the child?" To which the girl replied, "Oh, I did not kill it. He was preserved, and grew up, and joined the —— Regiment, and went to India." Then, turning to the dreamer, she said:

"I have never spoken to mortal before; but I will tell you all. My name is Miss Black, and this old woman is Nurse Black. Black is not her name, but we call her Black, because she has been so long in the family."

After a short pause the girl was about to go on, when the old hag came up to the dreamer, and placing a hand on her shoulder, said something that the dreamer could not catch. Moreover, the impact of the hand had produced so sharp a pain in the dreamer's shoulder that she awoke.

In the morning the servant related her dream to Mrs. Chapman, and the latter, upon realizing that the girl her servant had seen in the dream closely resembled the phantom girl she, herself, had seen in the oak room, and the old hag, the hideous woman the nurse-maid had seen peering in at the lobby, came to the conclusion that the dream was no ordinary dream, but one due to some superphysical agency. Consequently, she made inquiries in the neighbourhood and learned that, about seventy or eighty years previously, a Mrs. Ravenhall and her niece, Miss Black, had lived in the

house. From this Mrs. Chapman concluded that Miss Black and the phantom girl with the long, dark hair, were one and the same.

More, however, she could not discover. Some time after this affair of the dream, Mrs. Chapman again saw the ghost girl in the oak room. She was staring into one corner of it, with an agonized expression, and wringing her hands.

Mrs. Chapman had the boards of the floor in that corner of the room taken up, but nothing was found underneath them. The last phenomenon that occurred while the Chapmans were in the house seemed to have no connection with any of the other phenomena. They were preparing to quit the place, although their lease had only run for three years, when Mrs. Chapman awoke one morning to see a dark-complexioned man, in a fustian coat, with a comforter or scarf tied negligently round his neck, standing at the foot of the bed. He vanished as mysteriously and inexplicably as he had come.

A few days afterwards Mrs. Chapman asked her husband to order some coal, as their supply had almost run out. This he promised to do. In due course, apparently, the coal arrived, whereupon Mr. Chapman expressed astonishment, as he had quite forgotten to order any. This seemed very remarkable, and Mrs. Chapman asked the servants if they had given the order ; but one and all denied having done so ; moreover, not one of them, they affirmed, had seen the coal delivered. Mrs. Chapman, getting more and more mystified, now inquired of the person from whom they usually had coal, and he declared it had been ordered by a dark-complexioned man in a fustian

jacket and red comforter. It was exactly thus, it will be remembered, that Mrs. Chapman had described the man who had appeared and mysteriously disappeared at the foot of her bed.

After this, the Chapmans were by no means sorry to leave the house. Subsequent tenants, it was ascertained, experienced similar annoyances, but they, no less than the Chapmans, were totally unable to account for them, save on the basis of the superphysical. It should be noted that the case rests on the corroborative evidence of several people, none of whom claimed to be mediumistic, or, so far as is known, had ever attended a spiritualistic séance, for which reason they were the more dependable, or, in other words, not so likely to be biassed and credulous. The case, too, as a whole, affords yet another example of what so many *bona-fide* hauntings are: just a series of phenomena, without any apparent reason, unless, maybe, it is to demonstrate to us that there really does exist a something that is quite apart from, though yet able, if it so wishes, to get in touch with our material, sometimes so painfully material, world.

Many strange tales have been told relating to old Richmond Palace, where many English monarchs lived and several died. One of the several who died there was Queen Elizabeth, concerning whose death Miss Strickland, in her interesting history, narrates the following:

"As her mortal illness drew towards a close, the superstitious fears of her simple ladies were excited almost to a mania, even to conjuring up a spectral apparition of the Queen while she was yet alive. Lady Guilford, who was then in waiting on the Queen, leaving her in an almost breathless sleep in her privy

chamber, went out to take a little air, and met her Majesty, as she thought, three or four chambers off. Alarmed at the thought of being discovered in the act of leaving the royal patient alone, she hurried forward in some trepidation, in order to excuse herself, when the apparition vanished away. She returned terrified to the chamber, but there lay the Queen in the same lethargic slumber in which she left her."

Having regard to their authenticity, less reliable, perhaps, than Miss Strickland's, are many of the stories and traditions that relate to the Palace, to the old Gatehouse, and to the Mound, called Oliver's Mound, where, in 1834,[1] some workmen, when digging, found the skeletons of three people, buried about three feet beneath the surface. Passing by the Gatehouse one night a tradesman is said to have seen two men in armour fighting furiously. Amazed at the spectacle, he was standing still watching them, when a man, very richly clad in clothes of a bygone fashion, came striding up to them, dagger in hand, and stabbed one of the combatants to the heart.

As the wretched man fell without a sound to the ground, the figures all disappeared, and the tradesman found himself merely staring into space.

This story was told me many years ago by Mr. Green, an artist, who was very interested in archaeology. He said he had read it in a collection of stories about old London buildings, purporting to be true, and published about the middle of last century.

Another story he told me of the old Richmond Palace ghosts was this :

One evening a man and his son, who were engaged

[1] See *Abbeys, Castles and Ancient Halls of England and Wales.*

in repairs at the Palace, were leaving it after their day's work, to go home, when a tall, gaunt woman in black emerged from behind a tree and proceeded ahead of them. She was carrying a sack over her shoulders, with something so heavy in it that she staggered. The workman and boy were regarding her with no little curiosity, as there was something unusual in her appearance, when, to their horror, a hand suddenly emerged from a hole in the side of the sack nearest them. It was a large, coarse hand, and the thumb was missing. The mutilated state of the flesh suggested that it had been hacked or torn off. The man and boy tried to run after the woman to stop her, but their limbs refused to move any faster, and when they tried to call out, they found that they could not, that they were completely tongue-tied. In this state they were compelled to follow this strange woman, who never varied her pace and always kept the same distance ahead of them. On and on they went, right through the Palace grounds till they came to Oliver's Mound, when both the man and the boy felt a slight, though sharp, blow dealt them on the shoulder. Both turned round quickly and simultaneously to see who or what had struck them, and, to their amazement, saw no one and nothing. Facing round again, they then looked for the woman, but she was nowhere to be seen, she had vanished. A few moments later, while they were still looking around, wondering where she could have gone, they heard a series of wild, unearthly shrieks, followed by a succession of ghastly groans and gasps, that seemed to indicate, only too plainly, that someone was being done to death. The man and boy did not stop to investigate, they left the

Mound and made for home at something like a record speed.

The unearthing of the skeletons in the vicinity of the Mound had some connection, so Mr. Green and others thought, both with the phenomenon experienced by the tradesman, as he passed by the old Gatehouse, and the phenomena experienced by the man and boy as they walked through the Palace grounds, passing by the Mound, on their way home from work.

In the grounds of the Palace, too, there is a little hillock on which, it is stated, Henry VIII stood, waiting to see the signal given—a rocket sent up from the Tower of London—to apprise him that, in due compliance with his order, Anne Boleyn was beheaded. According to Mr. Green, his ghost may still be seen, occasionally, standing on the hillock, with its white bloated face, a mass of exultation, and its gaze fixed gleefully in the direction of the Tower.

ADDENDUM

To the list I have already compiled, of ghosts that have haunted, and, in some instances, still haunt the Tower of London, I must add one other, namely, the ghost of Sir Walter Raleigh. My authority for this haunting is Mr. Timbs (see his *Romance of London*), who asserts that it is in the Prison House that this ghost usually appears.

With regard to the phantom bear haunting at the Tower, according to a correspondent to *Notes and Queries* (2nd Series, No. 245), before the partial destruction of the Armouries by fire, there was a paved yard in front of the Jewel House, and, opening on to it, a gloomy doorway, leading down a flight of ghostly-looking steps to the Mint. Strange and alarming noises had been heard, repeatedly at night, on these steps, and the unfortunate sentry, whose story I have told elsewhere in this volume, heard them just before the ghost appeared to him. Mr. George Offor, who was present at the burial of the sentry, asserts that the ghost did not come up the steps, but crossed the paved yard and disappeared down the steps. Be this as it may, though I prefer Mr. Swifte's version of the occurrence, as he got it from the sentry himself, both authorities agree that the sentry died from the effects of shock, the shock he had sustained upon encountering a denizen of the Unknown.

Referring to the house in Berkeley Square, I would

remark that, according to a certain lady (a lady of title whose name my authority withholds), the police were sceptical with regard to the alleged haunting and believed that, instead of being haunted by a ghost, the house was the haunt of coiners, who carried on their illicit trade there, with such secrecy that, so far as is generally known, they were never caught.

According to a widespread story, which was in everyone's mouth in my childhood, certain owners or tenants of the house who had lived in it for some time without experiencing anything unusual in connection with it, suddenly discovered that a particular room in the house was badly haunted. The discovery came about thus :

A young army officer, the fiancé of one of the daughters of the house, was coming to stay with the family, on a visit, and at a late hour the night before his expected arrival, the whole household was startled by the screams of the housemaid, who was in the visitor's room, preparing it for his reception. On rushing into the guest's chamber, they found her, lying on the bed, in convulsions, her wide-open eyes fixed with an awful expression of terror on one corner of the room.

Restoratives not having any effect, she was conveyed at once to St. George's Hospital, where she died the following morning, without giving anyone the remotest idea of what had frightened her. All she could or would say was that she had seen something too horrible for words to describe.

Upon the arrival of the young officer at the house in Berkeley Square, that same day, the family told him what had occurred, and as the room originally

prepared for him was, they said, undoubtedly haunted, they had prepared another room for him to occupy. The visitor, however, much to everyone's concern, insisted on being allowed to sleep in the haunted room, and it was in vain that his betrothed and the rest of the family sought to turn him from his purpose. Ghosts were all tosh, he said, and he would prove it. Finally, it was agreed that he should sleep in the room, on these conditions: that when the fatal hour, midnight, arrived (when, presumably, the horror appeared, as it was at twelve o'clock, exactly, that the housemaid had screamed), he would ring the bell, once, if all was well, and twice, if help was needed.

When bedtime arrived he retired to his room, while the family, unknown to him, determined to sit up all night in the hall, in order to be on the spot, at a moment's notice, should their help be needed. As midnight approached, they listened eagerly. At last the clock on the staircase struck, and ere the echoes of the last stroke had died away, the bell in the haunted chamber rang, once, feebly. Then, after a brief interval, it gave a tremendous peal, and, a moment later, there was a loud report. Terrified to the last degree, everyone rushed upstairs to the haunted chamber, where they found the young officer, sitting bolt upright in bed, propped against the pillow, and by his side a still smoking revolver. According to one version of the story, he was dead, but according to another, he was merely in a dead faint, and, on recovery, refused to describe what he had seen, declaring that he could not, it was too dreadful.

In both versions, however, it is stated that the family left the house within a few days.

Bulwer Lytton is said to have had this house in mind when he wrote "The Haunted and the Haunters," a story which appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine*, August, 1859.

Another well-known story of this particular haunting, which gained a certain amount of credence at the time of its circulation, is to this effect:

The house being to let furnished was taken by a newly-married couple. They were still abroad, on their honeymoon, when their lease of the house commenced; and the wife's mother, upon hearing the date of their return, went to the house to see that all was in readiness for them. Feeling tired after a long journey, on the day of her arrival, she went to bed early. The servants retired at the usual time, and at midnight were awakened by an appalling scream, which, after a brief interval of silence, was repeated. Almost too terrified to move, they at last summoned up the courage to go to the room whence the appalling sounds proceeded, and there they found their future mistress's mother lying on the bed, quite dead. Moreover, the expression in her wide-open eyes was one of such undiluted horror that, panic-stricken, they fled out of the house in a body.

The house afterwards was empty for months.

Another authentic story of this haunting, briefly told, is this. A man, who was very sceptical about ghosts, having obtained permission to spend a night in the house, went there alone, or, rather, accompanied only by his dog. Both were found, in the morning, in the notorious haunted room—dead.

These are but a few of the many stories told and vouched for of the famous house in Berkeley Square,

and although one cannot guarantee those responsible for them to be entirely trustworthy, in my opinion, these stories rest, at least, upon a very substantial stratum of truth.

By some strange lapse I left out Drury Lane in my list of haunted theatres. According to a story [1] told some years ago at a charity luncheon, at Chatham, by Mr. Stanley Lupino, Drury Lane Theatre is haunted by the ghost of that great comedian Dan Leno. One night, after the show at Drury Lane, Mr. Lupino was lying on the couch in his dressing-room, intending to sleep there, as it was so late, instead of going home, when he distinctly felt someone was in the room besides himself. He then heard a noise, as if a curtain were being drawn aside, and getting up, saw a shadowy figure cross the room and disappear through the door. Greatly astonished, he asked the night watchman if he had seen anyone leave his, Mr. Lupino's room, but the night watchman had seen no one.

Back in his room, Mr. Lupino got the fright of his life. Hearing a noise beside him, he looked up from his couch, right into the white face of Dan Leno's ghost. He was so scared that he sprang up and ran, helter-skelter, out of the theatre to the Globe Hotel.

Someone who stayed in the same dressing-room, the following night, also saw poor Leno's phantasm. This person, not quite so shock-proof as Lupino, promptly fainted.

Sadler's Wells Theatre, so I have always understood, was said to be haunted by the ghost of Joe Grimaldi, and after the theatre had fallen into disuse, it was still to be seen there in one of the boxes.

[1] See *Reynold's Illustrated News*, October 28, 1923.

A box at Drury Lane Theatre was also long rumoured to be haunted by the ghost of the same individual. Its white, painted face, it was stated, had been seen behind the material occupants of the box; and over their shoulders it would peer at the stage, fixing its eyes, always, on one or other of the performers.

Joe Grimaldi, probably the most renowned of all the clowns that have ever performed on an English stage, was the son of a Genoese clown and dancer, who was also a dentist, such a combination of professions being surely one of the strangest on record. Grimaldi senior, known, on account of his extraordinary strength, as "Iron Legs," performed at Drury Lane when David Garrick was its manager. He was a firm believer in the superphysical, and used to visit alleged haunted houses and places, hoping that he might be so lucky as to see the ghost. It was his love of the weird that led him to invent the Skeleton Scene and the Cave of Petrifaction, in pantomime, both of which deservedly gained great popularity. He had a perpetual dread of being buried alive, and ordained in his will that after the doctor had pronounced him dead, his daughter should cut off his head, "to make sure he was not alive." We are glad to say that the daughter did not carry out her father's wishes to the letter; instead of performing the desired operation herself, she deputed someone else to do it in her presence; and that surely was as much as, if not more than, could be expected of any ordinary human.

Joe Grimaldi also appears to have been interested in things weird and ghostly, but not, perhaps, to quite the same extent. He was born in Stanhope Street,

Clare Market, December 18, 1778, and made his first appearance at Sadler's Wells before he was three years old. That his ghost should have haunted the theatre at which he made his début at this very early age, and with which he was subsequently associated for so many years, is not to be wondered at, since he must have conceived a very strong affection for it, and, as I have frequently remarked, every haunting is rooted in and traceable to a very strong emotion of some sort or another. It is more difficult to find a reason for Grimaldi's appearances, in ghostly form, at Drury Lane; indeed, I have always inclined to the belief that the ghost which occasionally manifested there was either that of Grimaldi senior or some clown of lesser note.

Apropos of the ghost stories told me by tramps whom I have met and talked with in the parks and commons at night, I would remark that those who have a real knowledge of the tramp fraternity will bear me out when I say that no class of people, as a whole, are more prone to superstition, and that those vagrants who are accustomed to tramping the country roads are the most superstitious of all. One seldom, for instance, finds a tramp sleeping in the immediate proximity of a churchyard or any house or place that is said to be haunted. Some sensation was caused in Eastry, Kent, a few years ago,[1] by a rumour generated by tramps that the vagrant ward at the local Poor Law Institution (in other words the Workhouse) was haunted. There had been a marked decrease in the number of vagrants applying for admission, and the apparent reason for this was eventually discovered.

[1] Reported at the time in the Press.

A middle-aged tramp, who was the only occupant of the vagrant ward, aroused the workhouse staff one night by his cries. On running into the ward, to see what was the matter, they discovered him sitting up in bed, trembling all over and ghastly pale. He declared he had been awakened by strange, unearthly noises in the room and had seen a ghost. He said he knew the workhouse was haunted, as tramps he had met on the road had told him so. Finding it impossible to calm him, the authorities were obliged to put him in another ward; but it took him several days to recover from his alarm.

A ghost I omitted to mention, when dealing with hauntings in greater London, is that of Lady Frederick Campbell.

In 1807 there was a fire in Coombe Bank House, Sundridge, Kent, and in it Lady Frederick Campbell perished, but whether it is for this reason or some other that she haunts, it is impossible to say. She certainly suffered a tragic and untimely death, but equally certain is it that tragic occurrences marred her life. Before her marriage to Lord Frederick Campbell, the owner of the Coombe Bank Estate, she was the widow of the notorious fourth Earl Ferrers, who was hanged at Tyburn, in 1760, for the murder of his steward; and as it was largely due to her testimony that he was convicted, he was so incensed against her that he cursed her, declaring that her end would be a much more painful one than his own. It is strange that, seemingly, this curse was fulfilled, and its being thus fulfilled makes one wonder whether it might not be owing to the curse that Lady Frederick is still earth-bound (according to repute), and still periodically haunting

the countryside, on and around the Coombe Bank Estate.

This concludes my list of hauntings in the present volume. It has been remarked by reviewers of some of my books that I do not explain the phenomena; but how can I? How can anyone explain phenomena that the most eminent scientists fail to explain by any known physical laws. Were I able to prove the origin of and *raison d'être* or, if you prefer it, give the correct explanation of all the genuine phenomena I have met with in my investigations of hauntings, I should surely be able to explain that seemingly insoluble mystery, the origin of Life and Creation, a mystery that is more likely than not to remain a mystery, since one can hardly imagine brains in the future being more brilliant than the brains of to-day, which it has baffled.

A certain sort of haunting, however, may, I think, be accounted for some day by physical laws, about which, at the present time, we know absolutely nothing. The haunting to which I refer is automatic, that is to say, the ghost which does the same thing, night after night, and does it in the same place, and at the same hour, without any apparent variation. Hence, it seems possible that such phenomena may be due to impressions that were once made in the ether by very strong mental and physical actions, these impressions being subsequently rendered visible and auditory by certain atmospheric conditions, at present unknown to us. Thus, I think, not only the purely mechanical actions of some ghosts but their failure to respond when we attempt to communicate with them may be accounted for. These ghosts, in fact, can no

more respond to our addresses than can the shadows of trees and of other material objects, or pictures at the cinema, or televisions, which latter, if science had not taught us otherwise, might well be attributed to the supernatural.

Other species of seeming ghostly phenomena that may, at some future date, be accounted for by natural laws are projections or phantoms of the living, such for example as that of Dr. Wynn Westcott at the British Museum. Mental concentrations would seem capable of producing visualized forms, not only in the likeness of the person concentrating, but in the likeness of whatever he may be concentrating on. In some cases it would seem, not unlikely, that the phantasms seen, especially when they are seen by only one person, are not objective at all but subjective, being mere mental visions, due to telepathic communication between one forceful mind and one that is responsive; and I would like, here, to remind my readers that this faculty of concentration, which is a gift no less than second sight, is not the sole prerogative of humans; animals possess it too, for, as every student of occultism knows, hauntings by animal phenomena are just as common as those by phenomena in human shape. This theory of telepathy, as I have just remarked, may very possibly account for phenomena experienced by one person singly, and possibly —though in this case the theory would seem less feasible—it might account for phenomena experienced, simultaneously, by more than one person. If one mind is sensitive to and capable of receiving a telepathic communication, it is conceivable two or even more minds might be equally sensitive and capable of

receiving, simultaneously, such communications. On the other hand, if the phenomena are not experienced collectively, the probability of them being due to telepathic communication substantially lessens, as it is difficult in the case of only one person seeing the "ghost" to eradicate the possibility of suggestion, imagination and invention.

Apart from automatic ghosts, projections, telepathically induced phenomena and thought forms, there are other kinds of hauntings to be accounted for. Hauntings, in which the ghost performs such purely physical actions as opening and shutting doors, moving furniture and removing bed-clothes, can scarcely be explained by the theory that they are impressions in the ether, though possibly, in some instances, they might be accounted for by the theory of projection.

However, it has not yet been established on anything like a satisfactory scientific basis that mental force alone can accomplish purely physical actions; and until that has been decided, it is not possible to say, definitely, whether or not projections or phantasms of the living, which would seem to be entirely the products of intense mental concentration, can explain this type of haunting, *i.e.* the haunting characterized by physical actions. So that any theoretical explanation of this sort of haunting can only be speculative, and all we can confidently assert in discussing its origin is that it may be superphysical; but on the other hand it may not.

Another kind of haunting that defies analysis is the haunting by the Prophetic Ghost, such as the Banshee, the Drummer of Airlie, and the Gwrach y Rhibyn or Hag of the Dribble. Indeed, that these ghosts are

anything but genuine ghosts, that is to say beings that exist entirely separate from this world, and entirely independent of it, is to my mind inconceivable. They are, I believe, just as much the result of Other World agency as the phenomena that appear to us in the likeness of those who have passed over, and show distinct signs of consciousness and intelligence. It may be found, perhaps, after skilled inquiry into evidence and a quite impartial sifting, that hauntings by genuine ghosts are few and far between; but no matter how many or how few they be, to those who, like myself, regard them as the surest proof of a Future Life, to know that even one exists is an untold blessing. Finally, if it ever should happen that the genuine ghost, contrary to all previous conceptions of the possible, is demonstrably proved to be subject to the natural laws of this physical world, belief in a Hereafter on our present plane will receive a crushing and even, so far as many people are concerned, conceivably a knock-out blow.

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